

# Lovecraft Studies 14



J. Scott Marlowe Jan 1987

## CONTENTS

*Lovecraft Studies*

Volume 6, Number 1

Spring 1987

Published April 1, 1987

Cover by Jason C. Eckhardt

Copyright © 1987 by Necronomicon Press

*Lovecraft Studies* is published twice a year, in Spring and in Fall. Price per issue is \$4.00 in U.S. funds. Orders should be sent to the publisher, Necronomicon Press, 101 Lockwood Street, West Warwick, RI 02893.

Articles and letters should be sent to the editor, S. T. Joshi, 281 4th Street #3, Jersey City, NJ 07302, and must be accompanied by a self-addressed stamped envelope if return is desired. All reviews are assigned. Literary rights for articles and reviews will reside with *Lovecraft Studies* for one year after publication, at which time they shall revert to the respective authors. Payment is made in contributor's copies.

# What is the Cthulhu Mythos?

A Panel Discussion

with

Donald R. Burleson, S. T. Joshi, Will Murray,  
Robert M. Price, and David E. Schultz

**O**n Friday, October 31, 1986, at the World Fantasy Convention in Providence, R.I., a panel discussion was held on the question of what constitutes the Cthulhu Mythos. Moderator S. T. Joshi and the four other panelists discussed the question and related issues for nearly two hours, beginning with preliminary statements by each member and followed by discussion amongst the panelists and intermittent questions and comments by members of the audience. Nearly the whole of the discussion is transcribed below. Although each panelist has slightly touched up his remarks, the flavour of the live discussion has been preserved; and every effort has been made to identify the speakers from the floor. Quotations from Lovecraft, usually made off the cuff, have been verified, although in many cases the panelists have merely paraphrased Lovecraft's words or put words into Lovecraft's or others' mouths rhetorically. Certain parts of the discussion not bearing on the central topic have been excised. Appended to the panel discussion are supplementary statements by each panelist, written specifically for appearance here.—S. T. J.

Joshi: . . . If you have kept up on the recent issues of Lovecraft Studies and other things, you will know that one of the burning issues of the day is the Cthulhu Mythos: namely, what is it, or is it anything? We want to address this issue at the moment. . . . I think there are very divergent views as to what the Cthulhu Mythos is, or if it is anything at all, whether it exists or not, and I think we will start things off on that issue.

Burleson: First of all, as has been quite widely discussed by now, the term "Cthulhu Mythos" is one of which Lovecraft would probably not have approved had he ever heard it, which he didn't. Various substitutions have been proposed, like "Lovecraft Mythos", "Yog-Sothoth Cycle of Myth", etc., etc., and now, of course, the issue has recently been raised whether there should be any such term at all. So it becomes more and more difficult to know exactly where we go from here. I am inclined to think that such a term is not entirely without its use. If we wanted to use such a term as "Lovecraft Mythos", for example, we can perhaps do so productively, but I think we need to give some thought to what it means, and what it does not mean.

There has been an awful lot of ink spilled over, for example, what stories "belong" to the Mythos, what stories do not "belong" to the Mythos; I can remember years ago reading Lin Carter's *A Look behind the Cthulhu Mythos* and seeing endless agonising over whether "The Colour out of Space" or "The Hound" was a Mythos story. I'm inclined to think that that is largely a waste of time—to try to decide which stories "are" Mythos stories and which stories "are not". In the first place, I have trouble myself with the notion that if the Mythos is anything, it is a collection of works of some sort. I'm not sure that that's really the way the term "mythos" is customarily used.

There has been a lot written recently, for example, on the differences between the "Lovecraft Mythos" (whatever that is) and the Christian mythos, and I think we can look at that as a clue to how the word "mythos" should and should not be used. Certainly, when we speak of the "Christian mythos", for example, we don't mean a collection of works of some kind—at least, I don't think that's what we mean: we don't mean the Bible and the works of Thomas Aquinas and the works of various theologians and so forth. I think what we mean by a term like "mythos" in that setting is a sort of world view, a philosophical system by which somebody tries to answer the question: "What is the universe all about? What is the place of humankind (if any) in it?" I'm inclined to think that looking at the term "mythos" as meaning something more like that, we can more nearly give meaning to the term "Lovecraft Mythos", because I think that that, if anything, is what the Lovecraft Mythos is. I think it's a unique expression of a world view.

I think that Lovecraft had a certain vision, I think he tried to express it through fiction and in other ways, and it seems to me that a lot of the attempts at putting the stories "in" the Mythos or "out of" the Mythos are pointless; I think the most meaningful thing you can do ultimately is to say, first of all, that the Mythos is a certain kind of world view that sees the universe in a certain way (more about that, I hope, a little later), and I think that what basically Lovecraft is doing with some stories is more centrally expressing that world view and with some other stories not so centrally expressing that world view. At least, by what I see in the concept of the Lovecraft Mythos, I see a story like "The Shadow out of Time" expressing a key idea in the Mythos very centrally, whereas I see a story (albeit good in other ways) like "Cool Air", for example, as expressing the concept of the Mythos only very peripherally. My own feeling about the thing is that it's not really a collection of works in which one can either pigeonhole certain items or not pigeonhole them; I think it's an expression of a world view. I think there's an entire spectrum of possibility as to how strongly a given story reflects the world view or does not do so.

Joshi: I think we all know, or should know, that the term "Cthulhu Mythos" was really coined, or at least popularised, by August Derleth. Recently David E. Schultz has done a great deal of work in tracing exactly how Derleth went about giving birth to what we may call the adulterated

version of the Mythos. I think, Dave, you want to explain how Derleth went about doing that; and if we can isolate the Derleth additions or misinterpretations and then clear those away, we can get a better view of what Lovecraft's own conceptions were.

Schultz: First of all, I agree with Don—he just said something that rang a bell with me and hadn't occurred to me, and it put something in place for me. I think that the Lovecraft Mythos is Lovecraft's world view. I have a problem with the term, and maybe in time we may come to grow out of that problem. "Lovecraft Mythos" may be seen by some as a substitute for "Cthulhu Mythos", and so people may tend to think of it still as a certain bunch of stories, along with stories written by other people, which somehow form this body of work. I think that all of Lovecraft's stories reflect his world view. All except a very few reflect it very strongly, including a story like "Cool Air", which Don might say is peripheral. They all reflect his outlook and attitude, the way he saw things.

As S. T. said, August Derleth steered all this in a certain wrong direction. In 1931 he had written to Lovecraft (we don't have the letter he wrote to Lovecraft) and Lovecraft in reply said, "I don't think the term 'Mythology of Hastur' is a very good one to use to describe my stories." Derleth substituted the word "Cthulhu" later, so it amounts to being the same thing. So he came up with this idea long before Lovecraft died. When Lovecraft died, he was free to exploit that term and develop it as he wanted to. In writing to certain people, like Farnsworth Wright, Derleth would use the term "Cthulhu mythology" and he seemed to perceive it as certain stories that Lovecraft wrote, stories which "belonged" to this mythology. Unfortunately, he misunderstood how other writers played this literary game: he kept saying that Clark Ashton Smith "contributed" to the Mythos, that Frank Belknap Long "contributed" to the Mythos. That's not true. These people had written stories that Lovecraft, when he wrote a story, borrowed a term or a name from, and that was the extent of that. So we supposedly have a bunch of so-called "Mythos" stories by Smith that he didn't really write that way—he didn't say, "Well, I'm going to write a story and borrow Lovecraft's mythology." In fact, Clark Ashton Smith had prepared a list for August Derleth of what he called "Stories Using the Mythology of the Old Ones", and he gave little synopses of what these stories are about, and he says, "Here's where I introduce Tsathoggua," "Here's where I introduce the wizard Eibon." In only one of those stories does he say anything about Lovecraft's stuff: he says, "Here I use the name Yog-Sothoth but I spell it differently."

So there is really no contribution to this body of stories; August Derleth interpreted it that way. He made a definite attempt to "contribute" stories; he wanted to get on the bandwagon. Lovecraft would tell Derleth, "The reason you read that here and there—in my story and Smith's—is that we just throw these things back and forth, for background." Lovecraft says that a lot—these things are meant to be *background*. When Derleth uses these elements, he puts them in the foreground: he writes stories about the magical monsters, books, and all that stuff. Lovecraft didn't write about

those things per se; he wrote about other things, and he used these elements to form the background of whatever it was he wanted to talk about. So Derleth really gave this a bum steer very early. When Lovecraft died, there was nobody to object, and everybody looked to August Derleth as being the "main disciple", so he must be telling us what is right; he knew Lovecraft. He wrote about nine Mythos stories before Lovecraft died, and I don't know if Lovecraft ever saw any of them—he may have; they talked about them. This was very much on Derleth's mind—he wrote more Mythos stories than Lovecraft did, if you want to use that term. Anyway, I think that Don brought up a good point: if you want to use the term "Lovecraft Mythos", it has to be recognised that we're not going to bring in all the things by other people. "Lovecraft Mythos" is really a term that describes his entire body of work, not just stories, but his essays, his poetry. They are not stories about monsters, they're stories about him, about people. I see a big area of study opening up if you look at that, and I hope sometime to present more of this information about how the Cthulhu Mythos developed and why maybe the concept ought to be laid to rest. It's OK to read Mythos fan fiction, I suppose, but I wouldn't want to drag Lovecraft into it—he really has nothing to do with that.

Joshi: Bob Price may or may not (if I understand him correctly) have a different view on this matter, and perhaps his view does encompass the writings of others, and perhaps you want to elaborate on that.

Price: Well, I would really not disagree with what Don or Dave said. I don't tend to refer to the philosophy or world view of Lovecraft when I talk about the Mythos in *Crypt of Cthulhu*, for instance, or in a number of related things that I write, although that is an altogether proper way of using the term; I see it as just a different kind of semantic thing, perhaps. If one were to use the phrase "Lovecraft Mythos", that's no doubt what it would best apply to; I tend to have a more inclusive but differently focused thing in mind when I speak of the "Cthulhu Mythos", because I do in fact have the work of others in view. What I am most interested in personally, I suppose, is the group of gods, grimoires, and legends that Lovecraft refers to, or has characters refer to, in his stories, under the rubric of the "Cthulhu and Yog-Sothoth cycles of myth", as one character says in "*The Whisperer in Darkness*"; and there he means, of course, as he says in one of his letters, an "artificial mythology" or his "pantheon", as he speaks of it elsewhere.

Now no fool would (well, perhaps some fools would, but this fool wouldn't) say that Lovecraft believed in these gods and these books; of course not. I met someone last night who *did*, but that's obviously out of the question. But the thing is, I do find it interesting that Lovecraft did such a good job of creating so convincing and realistic an analogue to actual cycles of mythology. People go overboard when they try to systematise it into some kind of systematic theology of the Old Ones, as I've seen people do; they can't imagine that there could be any inconsistencies in Lovecraft, and that's just as foolish, especially since he was actually trying to be inconsistent: he said he was trying to create the same kind

of inconsistency one sees in any ancient legend-cycle—variants here and there, differences as to how this being and that are related, differences as to what group and another thought of this or that being, you name it. There are different conceptions of what the *Necronomicon* is; it changes from story to story: is it an occult Bible? is it a daemonolatry that warns you against what it's describing? It is different even within one story; it's intentionally inconsistent. So there is no system, but there is a cycle of mythological ideas and entities. I know that a lot of other readers of Lovecraft are no doubt fascinated by Lovecraft himself, Lovecraft's ideas, Lovecraft's mood, his plots; I'm interested in all those, too, but a lot of people like me are interested in the Cthulhu Mythos as the cycle of artificial lore. I get a big kick out of fine-tuning and tinkering with that, as I would with any real system of mythology, and I'm certain there are a lot of readers who are similarly fascinated.

However, you do have to draw a lot of lines, even once you delimit the subject that way, because there are various mythological creations of Lovecraft that would not even fit into that: his Dunsanian stories are not "Cthulhu Mythos" stories, though some of those stories sometimes draw on the Mythos. These are confusing but legitimate distinctions, I think.

I agree with everyone here that these stories by Lovecraft do not comprise the Cthulhu Mythos; that is an error. If you wanted, you could perhaps speak of a "Cthulhu Mythos canon" of stories, maybe, but the Mythos isn't stories, the Mythos is lore. Various stories of Lovecraft draw on that lore to one degree or another. I think that's one of the great contributions of Dirk Mosig to this whole topic, pointing out that fact, which should have been self-evident but hasn't been to a lot of people.

Lovecraft was very meticulous in creating this mythology; he obviously got quite a kick out of it himself: he was very taken up with this or that god, he was tickled to be able to have Smith's Tsathoggua in one of his stories, and so on. It's obvious that he enjoyed this, and a lot of fans do today; I think Lovecraft would have gone along with that. This probably isn't the place to do it, but it would be easy to go into the particular relations between Lovecraft's own mythos and the parallel myth-cycles of other writers; for instance, Smith. Smith did view himself as having added to the Cthulhu Mythos; according to one reference in his letters to Derleth, he said, "I believe I added about as much to the Mythos as I took from it." And he said he thought that Tsathoggua and the Book of Eibon were his additions to it; that's a couple less than most people would ordinarily think. And Lovecraft regarded other people's contributions as just that: contributions to his expanding Mythos. So I think that the "Lovecraft Mythos" would be in a sense smaller than the "Cthulhu Mythos". Lovecraft himself blessed the additions of others to it; so I think that "Cthulhu Mythos" is proper as a broader category.

There are some stories that we now think of as having to do with it that probably don't; for example, I think that Frank Long's stories, "The Hounds of Tindalos" and *The Horror from the Hills*, probably were intended as having nothing to do with the Cthulhu Mythos, and probably Lovecraft

didn't think so, either. He made references to the Hounds and Chaugnar Faugh elsewhere, but he also made references to the King in Yellow, and so on—that doesn't mean that he wanted to incorporate them all. The problem that created the kind of wild confusion that exists now in Cthulhu Mythos fiction is what that great whipping-boy August Derleth did. There are a couple of problems here: he added his "Elder Gods" business, he made the Old Ones into elementals, and now it's almost cliché that those were incredible mistakes. But the fundamental error that he made, or at least the fundamental transformation, was that he did seem to go on the assumption that stories "belong to" and make up the Mythos, and once you go on that assumption, it suddenly seems that every element that appears in any Mythos story is automatically drafted into the Mythos; therefore, the Hounds of Tindalos, Ubbo-Sathla, Clark Ashton Smith's grandmother, anything that happens to be mentioned is part of the Cthulhu Mythos! And of course, there are many novels now written by various individuals that have everything but the kitchen sink and probably that, too, in the Cthulhu Mythos, and that is rank growth that does get hopelessly confusing. That doesn't necessarily make it bad, though much of the fiction written on those assumptions happens also to be bad. And as for fan fiction, enough said. (I say that as one of the sinners in that category myself.)

You have to draw a lot of lines even to define the Cthulhu Mythos; you have to know where it came from. I think it's perfectly legitimate to speak of a Cthulhu Mythos contributed to by Lovecraft and his friends in his own day, not as a body of stories but rather as a body of lore. The only distinction I would make is the transformation of the Mythos from Derleth onward, compared to that which came before, with the line that I've just drawn. If you know what you're talking about, I don't think you'r necessarily foisting all these ideas on to Lovecraft merely by using the term "Cthulhu Mythos"; you just have to make careful distinctions.

Joshi: Well, I'm not sure I agree with anything that anybody said here, but in order to disagree still further, why don't we let Will Murray have his say. He wrote a very interesting article—"An Uncompromising Look at the Cthulhu Mythos" (*Lovecraft Studies #12*)—which in a way triggered this whole controversy, and maybe he wants to get his two cents' worth in.

Murray: I should confess I wrote that article at S. T.'s behest, somewhat with tongue in cheek; by the time I finished writing the article I was dead serious. I'm not sure what I really believe, but it's my feeling that with "The Call of Cthulhu" Lovecraft did something fundamentally new and different—which we don't need to recap—and it was recognised as a new step in horror/science fiction. Even though it appeared in a pulp magazine, *Weird Tales*, it was clearly something new; it was a quantum leap ahead into a new kind of imaginative fiction. Lovecraft, after three or four stories, allowed himself to lose control over his creations, and it happened this way: he wrote "The Call of Cthulhu", "The Colour out of Space" (which I contend is a Mythos story, if in fact there is such a thing as a Mythos story), and "The Dunwich Horror". You're all aware of the fact that the Mythos began when writers began using Lovecraft's ideas and he their ideas—

Smith, Long, all those guys—and what happened in my opinion is that with "The Whisperer in Darkness" Lovecraft begins to absorb other people's stories and concepts into his stories just as they had been doing with his ideas, and he lost primacy over his own writing. He allowed something that he should never have allowed as a writer, but something he obviously allowed as a friend and as a kind of fan himself: he allowed other people to use his ideas and he theirs. It was name-dropping, it was tipping the hat, it was having fun, it was letting it build beyond Lovecraft's stories, it was playing a joke on the *Weird Tales* readers—to see references to the *Necronomicon*, Cthulhu, Yog-Sothoth, etc., in stories by different writers, including stuff Lovecraft ghosted—and it got out of control. Lovecraft did some things in "The Whisperer in Darkness", mentioning the "Atlantean high-priest Klarkash-Ton" (Clark Ashton Smith)—it's a joke, and it became a series of jokes, and it reached its ultimate expression, I think, with "The Haunter of the Dark", where he killed off Robert Bloch because Bloch had killed him off in a previous story, "The Shambler from the Stars". And then Bloch killed him off again. Lovecraft just lost control over whatever he was doing—whether you want to call it the Lovecraft Mythos, the Cthulhu Mythos, or anything else—wherever he was going.

You have to understand that a writer doesn't set down what he's going to do in concrete: even when he has something in print, it doesn't mean that he can't revise his ideas in later stories, and a contradiction may occur and has occurred in Lovecraft in terms of nomenclature and concepts. But a writer evolves over stories. His fiction, his ideas evolve; so wherever Lovecraft was going in terms of a "pure vision", a world view, whatever you want to call it, it stopped after three stories. It stopped dead, and it got into a lot of horseplay. It never got back on track.

In fact, Lovecraft, by dropping the names of Hastur and Carcosa and whatever from Bierce, Robert W. Chambers, and certain other writers, started that as a way of making his mythology seem as if it were an expression of all mythologies. I think this is a fundamental thing about the Cthulhu Mythos: Lovecraft wrote it in such a way that the Mythos was a reflection—in fact, it was the truth behind mythologies all over the world, whether Quetzalcoatl among the Aztecs, or Grecian oracles, or whatever. "The Dunwich Horror" is very much a Greek myth made modern, made cosmic. So what Lovecraft did was that he used other writers' ideas, he let other writers—contemporary writers—use his ideas, and it all became a colossal literary game. And it became less serious, even though the joke in the context of the first printings of his stories was only known to his fellow writers. Now we all know the in-jokes, we all know where it came from, and we lost the sense of wonder, the sense of awe; although we've gained a lot of knowledge. I think that, wherever Lovecraft was going with the Mythos, he hadn't developed it, it hadn't thought it through. He was revising it, and it got derailed; and it remained derailed. And when he died prematurely, August Derleth took what was already building and tried to systematise it—a mistake—and ran off with it as a property; he took control over it, which I believe he had no right to do.

And so, the Mythos, whatever it is, exists on several levels: it exists with the first three stories that are pure Mythos stories, where Lovecraft had a pure, serious vision that was evolving; and it exists subsequently starting with "The Whisperer in Darkness", where it becomes a group activity; and then it exists on a third level, which is truly the Cthulhu Mythos, where everybody jumps in and Lovecraft has nothing to do with it because he's dead. And so we have three stages of the Mythos. Lovecraft also did something else which makes it difficult to say what, even in terms of his work, is Cthulhu Mythos or not; and that's his penchant for dropping names out of earlier stories: he pulled in Randolph Carter, he talked about his "Arkham cycle" and yet Arkham began appearing in almost every story. So ultimately everything becomes subsumed into what we would call the Lovecraft Mythos, because in his later Dunsanian stories, like *The Dream-Quest of Unknown Kadath*, he mentions Nyarlathotep and Yog-Sothoth, etc. Everything becomes interconnected, almost inextricable, because he's cross-referencing things, and that became an aggravated form of this literary game. So it's a mess; and it's a mess because of Lovecraft, not because of Derleth—although Derleth is to be held accountable for other sins—but because Lovecraft did not retain strict control over his characters and concepts. And in part that was allowable because he didn't work with characters: nobody ripped off Wilbur Whateley or Peabodie or any of the other human characters, the protagonists. (Lovecraft's stories really don't have protagonists.) They ripped off concepts, they ripped off tentacles, they ripped off books—things that you can't copyright. If Lovecraft's stories were about a single hero, you couldn't do that: no one could rip off James Bond while Ian Fleming was alive, or Superman, or Tarzan, or Sherlock Holmes. Lovecraft allowed this to happen and he paid the price, in terms of losing the purity of his vision, in terms of losing control over what he was trying to do, and in terms of never developing what he wanted to do without interference: everybody was jumping in, including people he respected and admired, and whom he allowed to jump in, like Clark Ashton Smith; and everything got derailed.

Joshi: I think that every panelist now wants to disagree with every other one, and they obviously have. I'm going to attempt to disagree with all four simultaneously. I think we have to be a lot more careful in one sense: It is not that the Cthulhu Mythos or the Lovecraft Mythos is Lovecraft's world view; Lovecraft's world view has a very specific term, and he called it mechanistic materialism. Lovecraft knew enough about philosophy to know what philosophical tradition he was working in: in metaphysics he was a mechanistic materialist, in ethics he was more or less an Epicurean/Nietzschean/Santayanan, if you will. He was very well read in philosophy. The Lovecraft Mythos or Cthulhu Mythos is not the world view, but (I think) a series of plot devices to implement the world view. If you want to divide some stories into Mythos stories or not, you can, but it is certainly true that not only all Lovecraft's stories but everything he ever wrote is an expression of his world view. It's the world view that's the core, and everything he wrote, from the least little postcard to "The Shadow

out of Time", is an expression of that view. Around 1926 (or even a little earlier, perhaps, when he conceived "The Call of Cthulhu"), he began to sense: "Ah, here is one very ingenious or powerful way to implement or get my world view across." Now what is that world view? The world view essentially states that mankind occupies some very tiny, insignificant position in the whole realm of space and time; we are atoms lost in the vortices of infinity. Every story is an expression of that world view, every poem is an expression of that view, although I confess that "Old Christmas" is a little hard to fit into that category; every essay is directly or indirectly an expression of his view of the world.

I think all that the Cthulhu Mythos is (if you want to call it anything) is simply a series of little tricks that Lovecraft had to get this world view across most powerfully. And the reason why Cthulhu Mythos writings by other writers fail is because they don't share Lovecraft's world view; certainly Derleth did not, and certainly someone like Brian Lumley does not—he's poles apart from Lovecraft philosophically. And even people who more or less share Lovecraft's world view—like maybe Clark Ashton Smith, I guess, Long perhaps, or later Ramsey Campbell—don't write very effective Mythos stories because they're trying to put on the cloak of someone else. Derleth was not writing anything that was natural to him when he was writing Cthulhu Mythos stories. His world view was totally different: he was a Catholic, he was raised in the Midwest, he didn't know anything about New England, he certainly didn't subscribe to the whole cosmic philosophy of Lovecraft; so he tried to hammer his views into that mould, and he couldn't do it very well.

So here we have the Cthulhu Mythos—these little plot elements Lovecraft threw in to get his world view across. That's why I don't agree with Will Murray when he says that when he let other people into it, it was a weakening element: I don't think that something like "The Shadow out of Time", simply because it mentions the "serpent-men of Valusia" (which I take it is from Robert E. Howard—a little tip of the hat to Robert E. Howard) has any bearing on the powerfulness of that story. The story is unbelievably powerful anyway, whether that mention is there or not. "The Whisperer in Darkness" is not weakened because he throws in the "Commorion myth-cycle preserved by the Atlantean high-priest Klarkash-Ton"; the cumulative effect of that story is not diminished.

So everything Lovecraft wrote is an expression of the world view; the Cthulhu Mythos is only something he came by because he found it very convenient to get that world view across. Now what is the Cthulhu Mythos? what are the elements of the Cthulhu Mythos, if there are any? Well, I guess it's the gods; it's the mythical places that he dreamed up, like Arkham, Innsmouth, Dunwich; it's the grimoires, the Necronomicon, what have you. But I don't think these were very important to Lovecraft, because in his letters he constantly jokes about them: he signs a letter "Abdul Al-hazzred"; he writes a letter to Clark Ashton Smith, "From the bottomless well of Yugguggon"; it's all a joke, in his letters anyway, and even in some ways in his stories. But the power of his stories doesn't depend upon the men-

tions of the Cthulhu Mythos, because there are stories not using these elements that are just as powerful, like "The Rats in the Walls". That's why Lovecraft had no compunction mingling all these things together, mingling Dunsanian stories with Mythos stories; in fact, I don't even think he conceived it that way: he never said, "Here are my Dunsanian stories, here are my Mythos stories, here are my Arkham stories." It was all one to him; and that's why he had no compunction in throwing Randolph Carter into *The Case of Charles Dexter Ward*, where he doesn't really "belong", we would think. He didn't make clear-cut distinctions between groups of stories; it was all his own work. So that's one way to approach it.

Eileen McNamara (from the floor): Can it not be said that Lovecraft's stories, instead of emphasising his world view, are revolts from it? After all, the characters experience horror when confronting the notion of their own cosmic unimportance. And aren't such characters as Joseph Curwen or Keziah Mason symbols for man's transcendence over his limitations?

Joshi: I think that again is part of the trick. In a fictional context you have to have something or someone with whom the reader can identify. Therefore, in "The Shadow out of Time" Peaslee is a sympathetic character; we start following him, we start taking an interest in what he does. That's because Lovecraft wants us, at the end of the story, to experience the incredibly powerful emotions that Peaslee does: here he is at the end of the story, holding a manuscript that he wrote 150,000,000 years ago in the alien body of an extra-terrestrial creature; he's standing in this place and realising that the whole human race is some tiny little inkblot amongst a whole vast spectrum of creatures that have lived and will continue to live before and after mankind on this planet and on other planets. Naturally, Peaslee doesn't like that vision of the world, but we're not supposed to, either: that's the whole trick of Lovecraft. He wants to make us realise what's going on. And as for those long-lived individuals, like Joseph Curwen or Keziah Mason: we're not supposed to identify with them; those are again devices of plot to get the world view across. We don't like them; they're evil creatures, and they are part of the whole realm of what Lovecraft called "cosmic indifferentism", where we feel our inferiority in contrast to other creatures who are much more powerful than we are.

Is there anyone else on the panel who has other things to say about what we've said?

Murray: I disagree when you say Lovecraft didn't subdivide his stories: he talked about his "Arkham cycle", he talked about his Dunsanian stories; so you're wrong.

Joshi: What does the "Arkham cycle" mean? I've never figured it out.

Murray: I haven't either, but he knew.

Price: It would seem to me that it's a cycle of stories—

Joshi: Yes, but how do you designate them? "The Picture in the House" would be part of the Arkham cycle, since that's where he created Arkham; but nobody thinks of that as a Mythos story.

Price: I would think that it's not a set of places; in fact, for him to designate it the "Arkham cycle" may mean that the setting is the most

distinctive thing in it rather than other types of lore.

Joshi: Yes, but the thing again is that I don't think he made a clear-cut distinction. He said, "I went through a Dunsanian phase," but that didn't prevent him from borrowing various elements or characters from his Dunsanian stories into other stories, and he never considered that any sort of violation.

Murray: Because at a certain point he got into this very fannish sort of name-dropping thing. There's a point at which he talked about his "Arkham cycle" where in fact it was a valid thing up to that point; and there's a point where everything he was doing was being affected and polluted by other people, especially in terms of his letters. I think his letters are as much of a factor in terms of what happened or didn't happen. You say he jokes in his letters about Cthulhu; well, he does, and that's because people are asking questions, people are probing: "Tell us about Cthulhu; tells us about the Necronomicon: is it real?" And as a reflex or a defence he has reduced it to a joke.

Joshi: Joke on one level and not on another. I don't think he conceived of his stories as a joke—

Murray: No, he took his stories very seriously, but in the context of his serious stories, he's done a wink and nudge.

Joshi: Yes, but they're merely these glancing allusions that I don't think have any bearing on the stories.

Murray: That's one factor. The other factor is that he would absorb Tsathoggua from Smith and the Hounds of Tindalos from Long and vice versa. It became a mix, it became very fluid. There are things going on subconsciously. When a writer writes, he's better off left alone, he's better off not talking about his work; that's a thing every writer will tell you: you don't talk your story before you write it. And it doesn't help to talk it afterwards, either: you don't overexplain what you're doing because it causes different wheels to turn and makes you more self-conscious. Lovecraft became very self-conscious about what he was doing. He's writing in the context of his little study and his little inkwell and his paper: "The Call of Cthulhu" and "The Dunwich Horror" are very serious stories, pregnant with horror, pregnant with a new vision; but when he had to talk about it in person or through his letters, it became a shared thing. I mean, you don't talk about your sex life; in the same way you don't talk about your writing when you write about things that are important to you. It changes how you look at it, how you feel about it. You erect fences. You can't shield yourself if someone says, "Well, I think Cthulhu is X," or "I think he should be Y," or "I have an idea for an edition of the Necronomicon." But Lovecraft was a nice guy; whether he liked it or not, he would absorb those things and he would use them. He was not protecting himself.

Schultz: He just threw off those names. If you look at some of his so-called uses, take what S. T. said—"the serpent-men of Valusia". So what? If it were stricken, the story would be no different. He didn't borrow ideas from people, he borrowed syllables or sounds. And he didn't try foisting off ideas on people: he would say to somebody, "This is nice background stuff," in other words, "Write your own story. If you want to

throw in one of my words, that's fine." Now somebody like Smith understood that, and he did that rather skilfully. Smith would write his own story, tell his tale, share his idea, and a little nudge-nudge wink-wink with Lovecraft is one thing. But August Derleth would try to write a story about Lovecraft's idea. He wouldn't try to write a story about his own ideas, because he didn't have any ideas.

Murray: Oh, he had ideas—

Joshi: But not in his horror stories.

Schultz: Yes, in certain other works he is reflecting himself; those things we value. I don't think Lovecraft's stories after "The Dunwich Horror" are somehow polluted or ruined, because they still reflect his core ideas. I think "The Shadow out of Time" is every bit as strong as—

Murray: I agree that they're strong stories, but again what I'm trying to get across is the fact that he had to share these things beyond the printed page, in person, in letters, in cross-references. That had to alter what he would have done otherwise.

Price: One way to put Will's point is that I think the later stories are not that much different, but these devices, as S. T. properly calls them, these plot devices may become a bit less effective after he starts throwing in everything from everyone else, because now you either like or dislike them for their own sake. I find that when I read through one of these later stories and read about "Klarkash-Ton", I sort of flinch, I sort of wish he hadn't done that. The story is just as good as ever, but the name-dropping is more of a distraction.

Burleson: I think that when Lovecraft talks about his stories in letters, he only pretends to talk about them. I've seen a number of instances where you see what he says about a story in a letter, and yet you know things about the story and about its writing and so forth, and he's really only shewing the tip of the iceberg in terms of the total corpus of his thought.

Murray: He's trying to shield his ideas from intrusion.

Burleson: I don't know what his motives are; all I'm saying is that he's not really telling anything like the whole story.

Joshi: One point you must keep in mind is this. He writes "The Call of Cthulhu"; he never writes a story about Cthulhu any more. He writes "The Dunwich Horror", which is about Yog-Sothoth; he never writes about Yog-Sothoth any more. He writes *At the Mountains of Madness*, which is about the barrel-shaped Old Ones; he never writes about them any more (they enter into "The Shadow out of Time", but only in a peripheral way). He writes "The Shadow over Innsmouth"; he never writes about Innsmouth any more. Each time he's exploring and expanding his vision, because he doesn't want to go back and do things over again. All these devices of the Cthulhu Mythos were still expanding in Lovecraft's day, like the expanding universe, and he never repeated himself in that sense. He would never have written another story about the Old Ones or the Great Race, after he had done it once. He was exploring new visions.

Price: Whereas Derleth is writing not only the same story, but Love-

craft's stories over and over again. It's Wilbur Whateley vs. Ephraim Gilman or something. He is constantly rewriting "The Shadow over Innsmouth" or "The Dunwich Horror".

Schultz: "The two themes that Lovecraft manifestly intended to wed," as Derleth told someone.

Murray: But everytime Lovecraft wrote about something, some other writer jumped on it and used it, and Derleth just ran away with it.

Price: One other distinction that I'd like to throw in here about the levels of seriousness with which Lovecraft and others took this stuff: it's interesting, and I haven't heard it pointed out before, that in Derleth's stories and others in that tradition, the whole Mythos is taken as if it were literally true. Not that the writers actually thought so, of course, but the stories are written from the standpoint that there really are the Old Ones, and Abdul Alhazred is their prophet, and that what's said in the Necronomicon is true, etc. Whereas in Lovecraft, the Mythos is what Lovecraft thought all actual religion is: a kind of pathetic creation on the part of human beings to shield themselves from the awful truth of their own insignificance. As the stories themselves read, you have these human beings who are so foolish as to serve these outside entities, when their victory will mean the human servants' own destruction. It's as if they're trying to shield themselves from the awful implications of what they know about, and there are a lot of digs in the stories against these poor fools, the Cthulhu cultists, who can't raise their god from the deeps, and an earthquake happens to do it. Those beings in Antarctica are the real truth that Alhazred only vaguely guessed at, only intimated; so even the whole Cthulhu religion or Yog-Sothoth religion is false in Lovecraft. It's a kind of comforting misconstrual of what Lovecraft says is really the horror in the story; whereas for Derleth and the others, it's the truth, it's the truth about the world.

Murray: That's what I was getting at earlier when I said that Lovecraft wrote his stories so that they seemed to be a reflection of myth, or rather that myth is a reflection of the reality of the Cthulhu Mythos.

Price: But the Cthulhu cult and all its items of lore are actually attempts to shield the characters themselves from the truth. It's a buffer against the awful truth, rather than a symbol of it.

Murray: I don't think Derleth took his Mythos stories very seriously.

Joshi: Oh, he makes all sorts of comments that they're not even worth reading.

Schultz: One guy says *The Mask of Cthulhu* is his favourite book, and Derleth writes, "Oh, that junk? Why read it more than once?" Then why write it? Now, on the other hand, Lovecraft told Derleth, "I've got a lot of ideas I'd like to shape, and they won't even have anything to do with the Mythos"—these "Hastur figures" that Derleth favoured. After he died, then Augie got his commonplace book and wrote all kinds of Mythos stories on Lovecraft's ideas that Lovecraft would probably never have developed that way. I think S. T. is right—he would never have written another of those stories again, he would have found another thing to write about. Again, the monsters aren't the focus of his stories.

Burleson: I seem to remember Lovecraft saying at one point, "If I could see the visions that I have in my head already written somewhere, already preserved, already expressed, I wouldn't bother to write." And it seems that that's what it took.

Schultz: Sure, because nobody else had his view.

Burleson: Yes, it was like a purgation: he had to express it and then get on to whatever the next one was.

Schultz: Those ideas took a long time to get "purged", as you say. If you look at his commonplace book, there are so many ideas that sit there for six, seven, eight years, and then all of a sudden some little incident will make things come together, and he will work furiously to write a story and then it's over with.

Burleson: It is true that there are some things that he writes, then drops, and replaces with something else. But there are some interesting strains of continuity; for example, there are certain character types that Lovecraft seems to have been almost obsessed with. By the time he finally got to Joseph Curwen in *The Case of Charles Dexter Ward*, he had actually adumbrated Joseph Curwen four or five times, starting with "*The Alchemist*", even. The character seems to grow through a number of stories, until it finally comes to maturation, as it were, there.

Joshi: I think you could take each one of Lovecraft's major stories and find some dim and rather bungling predecessor amongst Lovecraft's earlier stories, of which it was a sort of foretaste. He wrote "*Dagon*"; nine years later he wrote "*The Call of Cthulhu*", which is essentially the same story except that it's given a tremendous cosmic dimension. He wrote "*The Nameless City*", which I think is a very bad story; twelve years later he wrote *At the Mountains of Madness*, a magnificent story basically on the same plot. He wrote "*Beyond the Wall of Sleep*", which I still don't like, although some people have defended it; about a decade later he wrote "*The Dreams in the Witch House*", which is a much better story although it also has its flaws; it's simply "*Beyond the Wall of Sleep*" writ large. So he was constantly rewriting himself. . . .

It's interesting which groups of writers have other people contribute to their fictional worlds and which don't. We have Sherlock Holmes and all the pastiches there; and there are others. But nobody wrote stories based upon Faulkner's Southern mythology, nobody wrote stories based upon Hardy's Wessex mythology. Why did people seize upon Lovecraft? It is a peculiar and curious thing. I think part of it has to do with the fact that Lovecraft had very close literary and personal ties with people like Derleth, Wandrei, Bloch, Howard, Smith, Long; it was almost as if they were a community of writers, and perhaps they felt at liberty to borrow each other's—not creations or even ideas, but their little terminologies. And Lovecraft—as you [Will Murray] pointed out glancingly, but I think it has to be emphasised—was too much of a gentleman to prevent it; he wasn't going to put his foot down even if he had wanted to, and he probably did. He read a lot of these stories in ms.; he read *The Horror from the Hills*, which is just the most unbelievably wretched story, and yet Lovecraft had some grud-

ging praise for it. He read some of Derleth's stories, which are incredibly bad, and yet he managed to say something nice about them. And I think Derleth in particular misinterpreted this and said, "Oh, yes, Lovecraft approved of what I'm doing, and therefore I'll keep on doing it."

Murray: You remember that with "Through the Gates of the Silver Key" written by E. Hoffmann Price, a consummate hack of that time, Lovecraft did have the opportunity and he changed everything. He re-made it totally.

Joshi: And yet he kept Price's name on the byline, even though Price didn't want it.

Murray: But that's an example of what he would have done had he been empowered to rewrite Long or rewrite Smith—

Joshi: I don't think he would have rewritten Smith.

Murray: Perhaps not Smith, but for some reason he felt he could get into the Price story and change it, and make it in his vision; and that's what he did. I've read both versions and you have too, and they're quite a bit different.

Schultz: I hate to bring this up, but Lovecraft actually told Derleth, "I like it when people borrow my stuff."

Murray: I'm sure he did on some level.

Schultz: He did, but when he said that to Derleth he didn't mean "I like it when you write stories about Cthulhu"; he meant, "I like it when you drop names, because that makes your story and mine somehow click together—"

Joshi: And it makes the reader say, "Hey, didn't I read that somewhere before?"

Schultz: But August Derleth said, "Oh, I get it" (when he really did not), and "Later I took on the mantle of Lovecraft because he asked me to write these stories." They published a letter in *Weird Tales* where he said that, and I thought, "Well, that's a little different from what Lovecraft told him."

Burleson: Later he was telling people, "We own the name Yog-Sothoth."

Joshi: While we're at this point, I must read you this—this is the discovery of David E. Schultz. There was one Thomas R. Smith, aged 15, who had sent Derleth this story, "The Forest of the Ravens." Derleth wrote to him (July 10, 1963): "Your story fails for precisely the reason that you wrote it. You are not yet equipped to treat portions of the Cthulhu Mythos, and I should point out that the Mythos and its pantheon of Gods etc. are under copyright and may not be used in fiction without the express permission of Arkham House. We are not niggardly with such permission, but we do require that stories reach certain standards of excellence; I fear that this story does not. As a matter of fact, it would be a considerably better story with all the Cthulhu references excised—make it simply the story of a dark pact between some ancient force and Ted—perhaps some offshoot of Pan—and forget all about Shub-Niggurath (you evidently have never read 'The Dweller in Darkness', a Shub-Niggurath novella set in upstate Wisconsin). The sheer arrogance of this guy—and to say "certain standards of excellence": well, of course, Derleth's stories reach that standard!"

Murray: It's obvious that Derleth didn't assume the "mantle" of Lovecraft; he pulled the rug out from under him!

Stefan Dziemianowicz (*from the floor*): This question is directed to Bob Price. He says that some of the discrepancies in the Mythos and in stories individually were put there by Lovecraft to give a fuller sense of latent myth, in which there are natural contradictions and differing interpretations. Will Murray, on the other hand, seems to say that things got off direction after the third or fourth story and Lovecraft seems to lose control of the Mythos. Are these views mutually exclusive?

Price: Not at all, because the fact that there were different interpretations would not be in conflict with Lovecraft's idea that this was a cycle of myths, not a system of myths; but he could have disliked the particular ideas that people came up with, perhaps; though we don't know that he did, we more or less surmise that he would have disliked this or that. But the idea that there were different interpretations of these gods—that would, I think, be entirely in concert with the kind of variation you find in his own work. Smith understood that: he warned Derleth that maybe he was misunderstanding this, that the inconsistencies are there for a purpose; and I believe Lovecraft himself says the same thing in his letters. He wasn't trying for consistency, and in fact realised it would be less convincing as a fictional device if it were entirely consistent.

Murray: I think there's another factor here. Again, as I mentioned earlier, as a writer Lovecraft didn't see his stories after they'd been in print as fixed in print; his ideas were still changing. He had no compunction about letting a fact be contradicted in a later story because he found a better way of expressing it, as all writers do. There are contradictions in many series where you think beyond the original work, and you decide to let the original expression go by the boards and just update it, make it better. Because it's in print doesn't mean it's in stone. As readers we may be aggravated by that, but a creative writer is not going to let the fact that he said something in print in one story hold him back from revising that concept in a later story, to make it better, to push it in another direction. Didn't Conan Doyle bring back Sherlock Holmes at one point? He killed the guy off, and then brought him back in a revision of history. It happens.

Joshi: Although Lovecraft did on occasion make some attempt to make up a little story when he made some particularly obvious change. For example, in "The Hound" he set Leng in central Asia; in At the Mountains of Madness Leng is in Antarctica; and he actually has a sentence or two there saying, "Well, some mythographers have set Leng in central Asia, but this does not seem to be correct." And, of course, Lovecraft and Clark Ashton Smith went through this complicated rigmarole about Tsathoggua, as to where Tsathoggua originally came from. Lovecraft was writing "The Mound"; then he received Smith's "The Tale of Satampra Zeiros" in the mail, and Lovecraft got all excited and said that it was a great story, and he used Tsathoggua in his story. But then there was some sort of contradiction later on, and Smith had to come up with some convoluted reason why the two stories don't really jive together. So there were attempts to smooth over some of

the obvious contradictions. But there are other contradictions that never got smoothed over. For example, I still can't make much sense of how the dream-world and the real world are supposed to fit together in Lovecraft—how the dream stories fit with the real-world stories. The geography doesn't seem to jive very well. And in "Through the Gates of the Silver Key" you have all the gods (Yog-Sothoth, etc.) in some sort of hyperspace where they weren't before.

Price: Or the sequence of extraterrestrial races. In one story, "The Whisperer in Darkness", he says that the Yuggoth-spawn were here during the "fabulous epoch of Cthulhu", but in *At the Mountains of Madness* it's clear that they come way after the Cthulhu spawn have shot it out with the octopuses and so on. The biggest whopping contradiction is the conception of the *Necronomicon* within the single story "The Festival", because the worm-people, or whatever they are, hold up this book as if it's the great sacred scripture, and they all bow before it, yet the one quote from the book you read warns that you'd better burn all wizards to ashes lest they become these worm-critters! What's the deal here? What kind of a book is this? Even within one story it's a totally different type of book. So I think it's not merely from one story to the next, but from one scene to the next. What would be the most effective use one can put this book or this god to? He just wasn't concerned with consistency.

Murray: Sometimes I think Lovecraft had a lot of personal investment in certain names and such. Why change the Plateau of Leng's location when you can just coin another name? I think in his mind—but never on paper—there are a lot of explanations for things, there are a lot of rationalizations of things, there are a lot of meanings. For instance, the two gods Nug and Yeb, which are mentioned in letters and alluded to in stories; if you put them all together there's a rhyme and reason behind them; but they're never explicated in a story in the same way that Yog-Sothoth or Cthulhu were. I think he had things in mind and they weren't fixed, they were fluid, they changed, but he was very much hung up on certain things and certain names, and he kept them; he changed them to fit stories and he wouldn't let go of those ideas, and I'm not sure I know why that is. I think to some degree it's all some crazy game.

Burleson: There are a lot of unwritten stories, you know. Think of Chaucer, who never produced the whole *Canterbury Tales*—

Murray: But Lovecraft never let that get in the way of using things that would have appeared in that unwritten story in later stories. It's a very interesting way to work.

Question (from the floor): I've read somewhere that Lovecraft derived a lot of his concepts from Sumerian mythology—but other people have said that he really didn't know it, he just used some of the names.

Murray: Lovecraft in some letter talked about his stories expressing or reflecting "fixed myth-patterns". When he spoke about fixed myth-patterns, what I think he was saying was that, as anthropologists will tell you, almost all myths in all countries have commonalities—common themes, common sources, common characters and patterns and lessons, etc. I think the human mind, wherever it evolves socially and culturally, will come up

with certain fixed myth-patterns, like Jesus Christ, Buddha, Prometheus, or whatever. There's always the myth of going to the sun, the myths of the moon. There are myths all over the world linking frogs with the moon—and Lovecraft used that in one of his stories, "The Moon-Bog". Lovecraft was aware that myths all over the world have certain common features, patterns, rhythms; I don't know what he made of that, but what he did with that in his fiction was to say, "Yes, they all come from one source, and the Cthulhu Mythos is the source, and the reason all these things are similar is because everybody is remembering the Mythos, but they're reinterpreting it." This is the point we were discussing earlier. Lovecraft may have based some of his concepts, and did in fact base some of his concepts, on specific myths from specific cultures; what he was trying to do in his stories was to say that the myths he was using for his inspiration were actually inspired by the thing he was creating!

Burleson: In "The Shadow over Innsmouth" he makes mention at one point of the Deep Ones, and then says that that's how the stories of the mermaids must have started. He actually has the nerve to make his concepts anterior to their sources.

Price: As for the Sumerian thing, this has been popularised through Simon's bogus *Necronomicon*, where he tries to throw in Aleister Crowley and who knows what-all; and he comes up with these bogus word-derivations that Azathoth was derived in part from Thoth (Thoth was obviously derived from Thoth in Egypt—no mystery about that), but the first half of the word is from Azag ("enchanter"), so it means "enchanter Thoth"; and Miskatonic comes from the Greek root -chthonic. It's just a lot of crap—there's nothing to it. In fact, S. T., myself, and Lin Carter once went to hear this clown lecture in New York, and boy! it was hard to sit through. It's just a lot of nonsense. Lovecraft did try to find real ideas in ancient mythology, as Will said, as when he says that the names Nug and Yeb are meant to suggest the ring of Tartar and Tibetan folklore, and Will has found interesting evidence that he may have had the Egyptian gods Nut and Geb in mind—a very interesting possible parallel. So it's not out of the question, but that particular theory (if you want to dignify it with that term) of Simon's is pretty bogus.

Joshi: The thing is that Lovecraft wasn't really an authority on any of these religions. He sort of puttered around, he picked up odd little things from stray bits of learning, oftentimes embarrassingly at second-hand. We've discovered recently that the very impressive list of cryptographic authorities mentioned in "The Dunwich Horror" are lifted straight from the "Cryptography" article in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. There's a lot of other second-hand erudition in Lovecraft; he was never really an authority on any of these things—except perhaps Greek mythology. And yet, he censured Poe for doing the same thing he did!

Steven J. Mariconda (from the floor): Bob, when you started making your comments defining the Mythos, you mentioned that Lovecraft "gave his blessing" to the elements that other writers had created, and in your recent article, "H. P. Lovecraft and the Cthulhu Mythos", you also said that

he "supervised" the progression of the Mythos. Can you talk about how you decide what Lovecraft approved of and didn't approve of?

Price: Mainly by what he did or didn't use repeatedly in his stories, and also by comments in his letters; for example, it's really obvious that he adopted Tsathoggua into his pantheon—he put it that way—and once Bloch had come up with *Cultes des Goules* and *De Vermis Mysteriis*, and Howard had come up with *Die Unaussprechlichen Kulten*, Smith The Book of Eibon, he really loved it, and anytime one of Lovecraft's characters would mention a bunch of books, all those titles would be there, at least a number. He must have liked that. And then there's Conover's *Ghoul Nigral*—Lovecraft said, "Yes, that sounds good, I'll have to use it sometime." Or *The Eltdown Shards* from Searight, or Kuttner's *Book of Iod*. He waxed enthusiastic on both in his letters and promised to use them. And so I would say that in those cases he seemed pretty positive about it. There are other things, though, like the name of the star in the primal language where the Elder Gods were from in "The Return of Hastur": Derleth was running that by him, and Lovecraft said, "You might want to have a better name for the star—how about this?" There he doesn't say, "By George, I like it!" And there you couldn't really say what he thought of it. But in some of these cases he seems to have waxed enthusiastic enough, even adopting them repeatedly into his own stories. So I feel on safe ground there.

Schultz: But he's not "orchestrating" the Mythos; he's telling Augie, "If you're going to write a story, why don't you consider doing this? But remember, it's your work." He's not telling him, "I want you to write it this way—"

Price: But that's what I'm saying: in that instance it's not clear that he's welcoming that addition, because that's a neutral comment. You couldn't say that in the case of Derleth Lovecraft approved of what he wanted to add.

Joshi: You specifically use the term "supervise", and that sort of sticks in my craw, because, for one thing, when Smith came up with Tsathoggua in the story "The Tale of Satampra Zeiros", Lovecraft knew nothing about it—Smith merely sent him the story. Lovecraft liked the story, so he used Tsathoggua. But he didn't "supervise" Smith, he didn't "supervise" Howard, he didn't "supervise" Long. I have some vision of a Managing Editor with a stable of writers—

Schultz: Those stories were conceived independently—

Price: That's what I was about to say. It's not as if these things were created as parts of the Mythos. They only became considered such when Lovecraft himself said, "Gee, I'd like to use this." I don't mean to say that he made assignments or anything like that.

Joshi: But I still think all these references are, as it were, in-jokes, they're playful and don't mean much of anything.

Price: Oh, they don't, I admit that, it is just a matter of plot devices; but such as it is, I think he did give his blessing to the elaboration of the Mythos. I agree that the stories are not about the Mythos, it's not the most important thing. I agree with most of what everyone has said;

it's just that, when all is said and done, it remains pretty evident that Lovecraft did speak of a pantheon, a legend-cycle, etc. He may not have taken it very seriously, but he had fun with it and a lot of readers still have fun with it, and it's legitimate and Lovecraftian to do that.

Schultz: You know where the problem comes in? Long and Howard and Smith and Lovecraft were all more mature writers. Somewhere along the way younger writers, in their teens or early twenties, would say, "This looks like fun. These guys are doing this, and I want to be a part of it." So they start contributing: that's where this "contribution" idea comes in, with Derleth. You can see in Conover's book [Lovecraft at Last] that Lovecraft says to Conover, "Well, maybe if you make up a book, I might have half a mind to mention it in a story of mine." So Conover goes, "Wow! Lovecraft is going to use my book! Well, I gotta figure out a way of making this come into being." He thinks he's the guy making the contribution—

Price: I agree with you, and I agree with Will that once Lovecraft began to do that, it did open the door to trivialising it; so you can blame Lovecraft for that. It would be aesthetically better in some ways if he hadn't done that.

Schultz: The thing that opened the door, I think, was when he said, "Well, it would be kinda nice," and these younger fellows thought he was almost telling them to do that. To Conover he says, "This makes good background." But they say, "I'm going to write a story about Lovecraft's Cthulhu people—"

Price: You're right, that's a big mistake, or at least it's a transition into a whole different genre of stories.

Murray: You know what it was really like? Lovecraft, in creating the Mythos, in creating Cthulhu, got hold of a tentacle in a dark room. He's groping toward the centre to see what's there, first with "The Call of Cthulhu", then "The Colour out of Space", then "The Dunwich Horror". And as he's groping he says, "Hey, guys, I got a tentacle!" And Smith and Long and Derleth and all the rest came along and each grabbed their own tentacle. And they pulled it apart! That's what happened.

[APPLAUSE]

[Following a discussion of why Lovecraft films are so unsuccessful, and how Lovecraft's methods of working are so different from those of film:]

Schultz: I think Lovecraft's stories are like paintings in that they are static: there's no motion in them, no linear getting from one place to another. At the beginning of the story, you have a pretty sketchy idea of what will happen throughout the story as revealed in the ending; and he puts his stories together like paintings. If you read "Supernatural Horror in Literature" and "Notes on Writing Weird Fiction", all the descriptions he gives on how to write a story use painting terms—"First you paint this, then you sketch this," etc.—it's all painting lingo. And so what happens is that in the beginning he sketches out what's going to happen in the story, and then he proceeds to fill in things in more detail, so when you get to the end you now have his complete vision. In fact, what you are

doing is looking at a completed painting. Nothing happens; it just becomes more apparent. You have to stand back and see the thing; I think a lot of people with the Mythos really bog down in some of these little details; they're not seeing the whole picture.

Burleson: "The Strange High House in the Mist" is a story that works that way. It is almost like looking at something painted on a canvas.

Joshi: Take a story like "The Shadow out of Time": the root conception or the root image, if you will, is a frozen, static image—it is the image of a man looking at something he wrote 150,000,000 years ago. Starting with this conception, Lovecraft said, "This is a great idea. Now how can I justify it? How can I draw up a scenario of events that will lead plausibly and powerfully to that conclusion?" The result is that he makes this incredibly convoluted story which makes this core image plausible—and he makes a huge novelette out of it. But the root image was this flash of a man looking at something that could not possibly be.

Schultz: All of his stories are like that. If you look in his commonplace book, you can see how the ideas in there were used. They're not plot descriptions: the key idea in the commonplace book from which "The Call of Cthulhu" was developed is actually a small thing thrown into the story, it's not the plot of the story. The scene in the commonplace book is that of a man who comes in to see a museum curator with a little statue. But that's a very small part of the story. In fact, the note he wrote at the beginning of the commonplace book when he presented it to a fan was: "These are just impressions of weird things I would like somehow to make concrete in prose." And so he would look at an idea and, as S. T. said, would figure out a way to flesh out that idea, to achieve that single impact, like the scene at the end of "The Shadow out of Time". So the things in the commonplace book are not story plots; in fact, many of the things he just threw into stories. August Derleth didn't understand what the notion of some of those entries was, and he wrote whole stories as though the entries were plot summaries, and so his stories don't really ring true, they don't really have anything to do with Lovecraft.

Steven J. Mariconda (*from the floor*): I get the impression that the panel is in concurrence that the really important thing about Lovecraft is the thematic concepts, or what Lovecraft called his "cosmic indifferentism". I wonder whether there is agreement also that the tendency of critics and other writers to concentrate on the trivial details or background devices or apparatus of the Mythos—the names, the gods, the fictional places and books—has a tendency to obscure and detract attention away from what the real value of Lovecraft is.

Murray: I don't agree with that, because I think it's precisely the terms and the apparatus which cause people to focus in the first place. If you dropped Cthulhu, if you dropped the Necronomicon, if you dropped all that stuff, there wouldn't be these little touchstones for people to be fixated on, and from which they can expand their awareness. If you take that stuff away, the young, fannish readers who were reading Lovecraft from the

twenties to the present would not be as fascinated. If you take away all the strange words, and you just made it about the concepts, it would be too dry and people wouldn't focus on it in the same way. You need those things: Lovecraft appeals initially on a very pulpish level; he doesn't appeal on an intellectual level, but on an emotional, pulpish level—he appeals to what S. T. might call the "baser" literary or non-literary instincts. I think that's where he gets his audience; he educates his audience, and his audience grows with him when they stick with him. I think you need those things; I would not have been as interested in Lovecraft without them. I still like those things—the little names and apparatus . . .

Joshi: But I think it is our duty as critics to go beyond that, because I think there is too much attention in the serious critical industry on Lovecraft—which is essentially *Lovcraft Studies*, *Crypt of Cthulhu*, and a few other places—to concentrate on these little things at the expense of shewing in greater detail what his whole world view was. I would in fact recommend much less attention given to the stories *per se* and more attention given to his lesser-known bodies of work—his letters, his essays, his poetry. How do they contribute to that vision? what place do they occupy? Personally, I now like Lovecraft's letters a whole hell of a lot more than his stories; I get bored by Lovecraft's stories, frankly. I don't reread them very often: I haven't reread a Lovecraft story in years, aside from the damn galley proofs that I had to read for the Arkham House edition. And after that, boy! I don't want to read Lovecraft for another ten years! But those letters—I can reread them over and over again.

Murray: I think the names, the nomenclature, the weird language, the grimoires, etc., are inextricable from the concepts. Cthulhu is Cthulhu; Cthulhu embodies everything; you can't take it away. If the story were called "The Call of Charlie", a lot less people would read it.

Burleson: There's got to be some sort of vehicle to present the concepts.

Schultz: I don't agree with Will. Unfortunately, Lovecraft's most popular stories when he was alive were "The Horror at Red Hook" and "The Hound"—those things were reprinted I don't know how many times in books, in *Weird Tales*; those were always big draws. But when "The Shadow out of Time" appeared in *Astounding*, everyone said, "Oh, no! not another one of these!" because they didn't like *At the Mountains of Madness*. They said, "We don't understand these gods and stuff." And those were actually the teenage fans. Well, some of them did understand, some of them didn't: if you look in the letters to the editor, you'll recognise some typical names speaking in Lovecraft's behalf—people like Robert Barlow, Corwin Stickney, people who really took a shine to him. But there were plenty of others who didn't. So I don't know that it's that clear-cut, that everybody was attracted to the Mythos. They like some of his "baser" stories also.

Mollie Burleson (from the floor): I think that's the magic of Lovecraft. I can still remember reading my first story; I didn't understand who the creatures were, and the names were strange to me, but that's what made it exciting.

Schultz: Oh, they did that for me, too. I still don't think they're what the stories are about. They do add a certain aura and they are important, but they're not what the stories are about, and I don't think they deserve as much attention as they get sometimes.

#### SUPPLEMENTARY STATEMENTS

*Donald R. Burleson:* In summary, I should like to reiterate my contention that a mythos is not merely a canon of writings, but rather a philosophical system that seeks to make sense out of the ultimate nature of the universe—a mythos is, in other words, a world view expressed in some fashion, whether that be by an oral tradition of myth or a body of writing. When we speak of the Christian Mythos, for example, we mean a world view with God at one end of the spectrum and Satan at the other, both intervening in human affairs to fight the battle of good versus evil, a mental scenario beyond which August Derleth could never seem to grow. When we speak of the Lovecraft Mythos, we mean, or I think should mean, a world view vastly different—a world view informed by Lovecraft's philosophy of mechanistic materialism, a world view expressed in varying degrees of intensity in his writings, and a world view characterised by an ultimate sort of irony.

In Lovecraft's world, and in its expression in his works, while there is no room for the concepts of good and evil, there is yet a fundamental dichotomy. On the one hand, Lovecraft's stories are stories told through the conduit of, and felt through the emotional framework of, his human characters, so that they are in a sense anthropocentric; but on the other hand they are as far as possible from anthropomorphism, for the implication of what happens to Lovecraft's characters is that man, uniquely equipped among earth's current dwellers to reflect upon and thus suffer from such a discovery, is wholly insignificant—it is as if man is jerked to centre-stage only to be given to understand that he doesn't belong there. This cosmic species of irony creates a primal sort of tension, in effect a living paradox.

Throughout history, art has shifted between a human-centred point of view and other points of view. In the discovery of perspective in painting, for example, the point of view was snapped back to the human-centred: a table was no longer a Platonic shadow-of-reality entity as if viewed in the "mind of God", but rather was an object viewed by a person whose own placement gave the table its particular lines and form. In literature, we have recently seen the "fashion" shift from such nineteenth-century devices as the omniscient point of view to the "central intelligence" point of view as employed, say, in the impressionistic writings of Proust, where the mental life of the character assumes overriding importance. Lovecraft, too, puts the spotlight on the human point of view, but with a terrible difference: with Lovecraft, man is indeed *homo sapiens*, the knowing animal, but what he comes to know, as only he can, is that the universe wheels blindly onward without the least concern for his vanishingly small part in its machinery. The resulting paradoxical tension is an effect unique in literature, and is

the ironic cornerstone of the Lovecraft Mythos; and I believe it will continue to fascinate literary scholar and more casual reader alike when less mythically informed writers have been long forgotten.

S. T. Joshi: I have no particular interest in summarising my conclusions on this matter; I suppose I have outlined my views in sufficient—perhaps excessive—detail in my opening statement, a statement whose conclusions I see no reason to reject or qualify. Instead, I wish to touch upon a few points made by other panelists upon which I did not have the chance to comment.

First, as to Will Murray's contention that "The Call of Cthulhu", "The Colour out of Space", and "The Dunwich Horror" are the only "pure" Mythos stories: such a contention becomes problematical when one realises that in "The Dunwich Horror" mention is made of John Dee's translation of the Necronomicon—a detail invented by Frank Belknap Long. Murray's point, I suppose, is that it was only in "The Whisperer in Darkness" that other writers' contributions were extensively noted; but I think the distinction here is one of degree and not of kind. Moreover, Murray fails sufficiently to consider the unusual status of *The Dream-Quest of Unknown Kadath*, written after "The Call of Cthulhu" and before "The Colour out of Space". This story contains such important information on Nyarlathotep, Azathoth, and other matters that it must be considered the second Mythos story. And yet, this story is at once a "Dunsanian" story, a "Mythos" story, and even a "New England" story—something which again shews (pace Robert M. Price) that Lovecraft did not establish clear-cut barriers between groups of his stories.

As to Price's notion that Lovecraft "approved" the Mythos additions of other writers when he expressed enthusiasm over them and promised to use them in his own stories: here again I think we are misconstruing Lovecraft's remarks and forgetting his tact and courtesy. I cannot conceive that he would ever have used Conover's *Ghoul Nigral* or other things of the sort in his stories, had he lived to write them: Lovecraft was simply being kind to a fifteen-year-old fan. The unintended consequence of this was that it made the whole name-dropping aspect of the Mythos gain undue importance and made it appear frivolous and trivial—a "parlour game", as Maurice Lévy termed it. Perhaps it had become that toward the end of Lovecraft's life; but by then, as I think Will Murray is right to emphasise, it was out of Lovecraft's control.

I suppose I ought to qualify my own remark that I no longer enjoy Lovecraft's stories. This of course is hyperbole, uttered for effect: in fact, I feel that we have hardly scratched the surface in understanding Lovecraft's fiction. I do feel, however, that more attention should be paid to other bodies of Lovecraft's work, if only the better to explicate the stories themselves.

In conclusion, I agree with Steven J. Mariconda that too much attention is paid to the obvious features and elements of the Lovecraft Mythos: the

underlying themes and concepts do become obscured when we spend too much time, for example, categorising how many stories contain references to Nyarlathotep or the Necronomicon, etc. All these elements are *symbols*: they themselves (whenever they are not totally frivolous) mean something in the context of the stories in which they appear, and that meaning will vary from story to story. If attention must be paid to these Mythos elements, then the attention should be of this sort: what does Nyarlathotep mean—literarily and philosophically—in *The Dream-Quest of Unknown Kadath*? how does this meaning change in "The Whisperer in Darkness"? It is through questions like these that we may be able to escape the sense of triviality and fannishness that infests so much of the criticism of the "Cthulhu Mythos".

*Will Murray:* It's obvious to me now that the Cthulhu Mythos and the Lovecraft Mythos both co-exist. The Lovecraft Mythos is all of Lovecraft's lesser fiction which may be linked philosophically or by lesser connective tissue like the Necronomicon or Arkham. The Cthulhu Mythos is a legitimate subset of the Lovecraft Mythos revolving around the lore of the Old Ones, which August Derleth and others wrongly attempted to systematize.

Unfortunately, the term Cthulhu Mythos has attached itself, like a sucker or an intrusive tentacle, to both the Lovecraft Mythos and Cthulhu Mythos stories, blindly squeezing them into one struggling lump. We may never separate the two as far as common usage goes, but I do think the term Cthulhu Mythos is here to stay and is a valid analytical tool.

After we work beyond that problem, I think the true focal point of Lovecraft fiction studies is the bizarre connectedness of Lovecraft's canon. It did not begin as a connected mythos, which confuses some. When Lovecraft spoke of an "Arkham cycle", he was speaking in 1928 terms, and it was a valid label for those stories which happen to have been set in Arkham. His Dunsanian stories likewise possessed a separate validity. And his Cthulhu and Yog-Sothoth cycles—as he once styled them—were another tendril. Many people forget that certain Mythos elements—the Necronomicon, Azathoth, and Yog-Sothoth as he appears in *The Case of Charles Dexter Ward*—predate the Mythos and were subsumed into Lovecraft's bitter cosmology only later.

Somewhere along the way, Lovecraft discovered the joys of self-pollination. Almost casually, a mention of the Terrible Old Man in "The Strange High House in the Mist" connected that Dunsanian tale with the otherwise incompatible "Terrible Old Man". The walls all came tumbling down with *The Dream-Quest of Unknown Kadath*, a story significantly written after Lovecraft's return to Providence following the failure of his marriage. In a probable attempt to return to his fictional roots, he allowed to coalesce in that novel Cthulhu, Azathoth, Nyarlathotep, Richard Upton Pickman, dog-ghouls from "The Hound", and the entirety of his Dunsanian fancies. It was a stew in which apples and potatoes, bananas and bits of chicken and fish, boiled in a troubled matrix. Whatever psychological needs Lovecraft was

exorcizing at that point, *The Dream-Quest* changed the direction of the entirety of his later fiction. Years later he repeated the experiment with "The Whisperer in Darkness", wherein Lovecraft wove a clever web of connections with the works of other writers. It was from this that the simplistic Derlethian version of the Cthulhu Mythos springs.

Lovecraft plainly delighted in making connections. Between his work and writers who preceded him. Between his ideas and those of his *Weird Tales* contemporaries, and between his concepts and the "fixed myth-patterns" of anthropology and science. I'm reminded of the parallel chronology "The Dunwich Horror" and "The Whisperer in Darkness" share. It was as if Lovecraft's questing imagination could no longer be contained by the writing of mere stories. He needed to do more.

I have an image of a writer whose intellectual growth outpaced his taste for pulp horror fiction, but who stubbornly clung to the images and devices of his childhood reading because his powerful imagination could discover no other compatible creative outlet. Thus, Lovecraft's continual decrying in later years of the inferior quality of *Weird Tales* fiction. He had grown up, why couldn't it? Yet he continued to read *Weird Tales*. And he continued to write for it in a more powerful way. He had no other vehicle with which to express his intellectual yearnings and his imaginative fancies simultaneously. Nonfiction would not do.

That, perhaps, is the reason Lovecraft's stuff is so powerful. He was like a Da Vinci whose only form of expression was fingerpainting. And his fingerpaints were magnificent.

*Robert M. Price:* I believe it is quite proper to speak of a "Cthulhu Mythos or Mythology" in the sense that some of Lovecraft's own characters do, as when Henry Akeley refers to "the Cthulhu and Yog-Sothoth cycles". That means, first, that the stories in which this Mythology figures do not together form the Mythos, though there's no problem calling them "Mythos stories" if we simply mean they utilize the lore of the Old Ones.

And, second, we have no business, if we wish to be faithful to Lovecraft, synthesizing and systematizing the Mythos lore, since Lovecraft makes quite clear by both his practice and his plain statements that we have variants, inconsistencies, contradictions, in other words a cycle of myths, not a systematic theology. For instance, one need not choose between Lovecraft's genealogical chart of the Old Ones and Clark Ashton Smith's quite different chart, as if one must be the "right" one. They are both pieces of lore, like the two contradictory genealogies of Jesus in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke. Just as these latter tell New Testament scholars about early Christian faith, not about the actual descent of Jesus, so the former do not tell us "the truth" about Cthulhu as Lovecraft conceived it, but rather create the literary semblance of a genuine ancient cult and its ragtag collection of lore.

It is fairly easy to divide Lovecraft's Mythos lore from that later

supplied by Derleth and post-Derleth writers. One need only distinguish which stage of the Cthulhu Mythos one means: "The Cthulhu Mythos as Lovecraft conceived it", or some such. Or even "the Cthulhu Mythos before Lovecraft and his friends began to trivialize it."

If I may be permitted another religious analogy, the problem we are discussing is similar to that of the development of doctrine in Christianity. Some generations ago, Liberal Protestant Adolph Harnack argued that we ought to strip away all traditional dogma to distill the pure teaching of the historical Jesus. That would be the kernel, all the rest discarded husk. Will Murray is taking Harnack's view on our question. Roman Catholic Modernist Alfred Loisy argued instead that Jesus' message was the acorn, and the luxuriant growth of dogma and tradition was the growing oak. The oak ought to continue to grow. On the Mythos position, I think Loisy's analogues might be Brian Lumley and Lin Carter, who gladly adopt any contribution by any post-Lovecraftian writer. Most of us would stand somewhere in between these extremes. But we probably do not need to find a particular niche. Let's just chart the growth of the Mythos and enjoy what stories, in what stage of Mythos evolution, that we will.

*David E. Schultz:* If I had one wish that would help rectify the past misinterpretations of Lovecraft's work, it would be to eradicate the term "Cthulhu Mythos" from the vocabulary of Lovecraftians. It is a term that remains loaded with undertones of meaning that will tend to linger even though the sources of those undertones have been and continue to be discredited. I cringe when I read statements, such as those of August Derleth, that "His [Lovecraft's] crowning achievement was the creation of the Cthulhu Mythos, to which a majority of his stories belong." The Mythos was not Lovecraft's crowning achievement. The realism of his stories is. One might say "William Faulkner is known for having created the Yoknapatawpha Saga. . . ." Both statements are true, but only in a very shallow way.

I like to think of the Mythos as being one of the tools that Lovecraft brought into play when he wrote of his stories. Just as Faulkner's novels are about people and not about his "postage stamp of native soil", so too are Lovecraft's stories about people. They are rarely about extraterrestrial or extradimensional monsters or even a mythology. This is not to say that Lovecraft was Faulkner's literary peer, or that their respective mythological creations are of the same scope or depth. Lovecraft's fantasies are interesting to us because they have an air of realism in the same way that Faulkner's fiction has a realism that appeals to us. In fact, Lovecraft's achievement is more admirable because his mythology is fundamentally unreal but he makes it believable.

As Will Murray pointed out, we may feel that Lovecraft should have retained greater control of his fictional creations. We cannot say for sure why Lovecraft encouraged other writers to make allusions to the things he wrote about in his stories. Lovecraft felt, perhaps mistakenly, that by making casual references to the ideas and creations of other writers, and

they to his, he was bolstering the verisimilitude that he sought to create. But it is not apparent, at least to me, that Lovecraft urged writers to "contribute" to his mythology as August Derleth claims he did. Derleth seems to be the only contemporary of Lovecraft's who actually believed this. My research into this matter seems to show that Derleth either misinterpreted or exaggerated what Lovecraft said to him in the matter.

Unfortunately, Lovecraft could not have known that things would turn out the way they did, and that his literary game was ultimately detrimental to his work—that the achievement of the very realism he sought to create was eroded and cheapened by the pastiches and parodies written not by his peers, but by his fans. The fans, unlike Lovecraft's contemporaries Clark Ashton Smith and Robert E. Howard, have been incapable of understanding that Lovecraft's pseudomythological creations were merely one of the ways he was able to impart his world view in his works. They don't realize that no writer could expect to do successfully what Lovecraft did if that writer did not share Lovecraft's world view himself.

The damage has been done. August Derleth's attempts to categorize, systematize and expand Lovecraft's milieu, for whatever reasons, have almost reduced Lovecraft's stories to caricatures of what they were. It must be admitted that the very features of Lovecraft's work that made it original and unique are the features that may undermine it. The most enjoyable composition can become dreadfully annoying if its most brilliant passages are copied by hundreds of lesser artists. Fortunately, the worst aspects of the Mythos cult tend to stay within the cult and the amateur press. Lovecraft will survive his cult following. His recognition as a major writer increases, and with patience we will see new avenues of study open as new understanding of Lovecraft's work comes to light.

*Finally, a parting note:*

"I saw more of the program this year. . . . I spent a pleasant couple of hours with the Lovecraftian industry, represented by Brown University's S. T. Joshi, Robert Price, Will Murray, David Schultz and Don Burleson. After a certain number of years at cons one gets weary of watching famous authors sidestepping the same old questions, so it was refreshing to hear a group of well-informed fans passionately and learnedly dissecting HPL's literary remains. As Murray remarked, 'Lovecraft studies are now so specialized they would strike most general readers as esoteric.' Despite that, he promised us an article in the near future."—Bob Collins, *Fantasy Review*, November 1986, p. 4.

We are grateful for the kind words, although I suspect that at least a few of us would cringe at being labelled "fans", however well-informed. Murray is not alone in promising articles; much more will and ought to be written on this subject.—Ed.

# Behind the Mountains of Madness:

*Lovecraft and the Antarctic in 1930*

by Jason C. Eckhardt

The short novel *At the Mountains of Madness* is one of the most powerful works in the oeuvre of H. P. Lovecraft, and a recognised classic of horror literature. In many ways it is typical of Lovecraft's works—the learned narrator, the prehuman civilisation, and the "double-punch" climax—yet in other ways it is very unique. But for the very beginning, the entire tale takes place in Antarctica, far away and far different from Lovecraft's usual New England settings. There is also extensive use of aircraft, and a very specific brand of aircraft, too. Why the differences?

It has been suggested that the setting is owed to Edgar Allan Poe's *The Narrative of A. Gordon Pym of Nantucket*, but while Lovecraft is known to have been a great admirer of Poe and even makes references to Poe's story in his own, the two tales are very different. Rather, consider Lovecraft's own words on the frozen continent: "I think the Antarctic continent is really paramount in my geographic-fantastic imagination" (SL III.218). And this was not a new fascination, either: "About 1900 I became a passionate devotee of geography and history, and an intense fanatic on the subject of Antarctic exploration" (SL I.37). Then there is also Lovecraft's extreme aversion to cold to consider. Antarctica, with temperatures often below -30°, would certainly hold much personal terror for a man who could not safely go out "at all under +20°, since the effects are varied and disastrous" (SL IV.83).

But there is also the basic consideration of size. In 1930, where else could he have hidden two entire mountain ranges and a fantastically huge city? Even the city of the Great Race of the later story "The Shadow out of Time" had to be buried in order for it to be discovered. No, *At the Mountains of Madness* demanded a place of colossal size to encompass both its physical requirements and epic content.

And what of the airplanes, including "four large Dornier aëroplanes"?<sup>1</sup> Their presence in the story is central, for it is in them that Lake and his expedition (and later Dyer and his expedition) reach the Mountains of Madness and what lay beyond them. It can be argued that the airplane is much faster than dog-team or tractor for exploring; but in a work of fiction, where periods of weeks or months can be condensed into a sentence or two,

1. Lovecraft, *At the Mountains of Madness and Other Novels* (Sauk City, WI: Arkham House, 1985), p. 4. Hereafter cited in the text as MM.

this hardly matters. To understand the use of airplanes (and Dornier airplanes) and setting in this story, an examination of South Polar exploration is called for.

Prior to Lovecraft's birth (1890) there had been various voyages of importance around Antarctica, particularly those of Cook, Ross, and Wilkes. But it was not until after the turn of the century and the emergence of a new class of explorer that the "Heroic Age" of exploring began. Roald Amundsen first attained the South Pole in 1911, followed only a month later by the ill-fated Capt. Robert F. Scott. There were important expeditions by Carstens E. Borchgrevink (whose trip was followed closely by the then ten-year-old Lovecraft; cf. SL I.37); Sir Ernest Shackleton (in 1904, 1914, and 1922); Dr. Charcot (1903-05); Sir Douglas Mawson (1911-14 and 1929-31); and others, many others, all through the teens and twenties.<sup>2</sup> Human flight came to Antarctica on February 4, 1902, when Capt. Scott rose 800 feet on a balloon from the ice,<sup>3</sup> but powered flight would be more than twenty years later in coming.

Yet for all this furious activity, the Antarctic remained stubbornly inviolable. The coldest, windiest, highest, and driest continent awaited the development of safer and more efficient means of human travel, and, in the extreme cold, regularly swallowed up the lives of even the most seasoned of explorers.

This brings us to the period 1928-31 and another reason for the setting of *At the Mountains of Madness*. During this time four major expeditions laid siege to the ice and snow: the Wilkins-Hearst Expedition (1928-29); the Riiser-Larsen Expedition (1929-30); the Australasian Expedition of 1929-31; and the first Byrd Expedition (1928-30). All four bear an important similarity to Lovecraft's Miskatonic Expedition—the use of aircraft. One of them bears a suspiciously large number of similarities to Lovecraft's.

The Wilkins-Hearst Expedition, led by famed aeronaut Sir Hubert Wilkins, landed on Deception Island (cf. map, back cover) in November 1928. From this base Wilkins became the first in powered flight over Antarctica on December 30, 1928. Other flights "proved" that the Palmer Peninsula was an archipelago. The Riiser-Larsen Expedition was headed by Hjalmar Riiser-Larsen, one-time pilot for Amundsen. He explored by ship and two airplanes the coast from Enderby Land to Seal Bay on the Weddell Sea, discovering several previously unknown land and submarine areas. Mawson's 1929-31 expedition (really two expeditions—1929-30 and 1930-31) sailed much of the long coast of Wilkes Land and part of Enderby Land and, like Riiser-Larsen, made extensive use of the aircraft they brought.<sup>4</sup> (Lovecraft's narrator in *At the Mountains of Madness* [MM 103] voices concern that Mawson and his men will explore too closely to the greater mountain range; but though they were in that general area at the time, Mawson's expedition was spared any such monstrous revelations.)

2. William H. Kearns, Jr., and Beverly Britton, *The Silent Continent* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1955), pp. 227-30.

3. W. L. G. Joerg, *A Brief History of Polar Exploration since the Introduction of Flying* (New York: American Geographic Society, 1930), p. 3.

4. Kearns and Britton, pp. 230-31.

That Lovecraft knew of these expeditions is likely; but that he knew of the Byrd Expedition cannot be doubted. It would be far more difficult to believe that he didn't know about it, and a lot about it, too. Led by Rear Admiral Richard E. Byrd, hero of the first North Polar flight as well as many others, the expedition was covered by most major newspapers, the August 1930 issue of *National Geographic*, and in Byrd's own book, *Little America* (first published in October 1930, it was already in its third printing by the end of the year).<sup>5</sup> Lovecraft wrote *At the Mountains of Madness* between February and March 22, 1931,<sup>6</sup> so would have had plenty of time to read any of these sources and adapt the information to his own use. The idea of a story about a lost Arctic or Antarctic civilisation had been with him for years at this point,<sup>7</sup> but it is clear to see that all the exploring activity must have provided him with fresh inspiration and a framework based in fact. Here follows an examination of just how closely the two expeditions (Byrd and Miskatonic) resemble each other.

The Byrd Expedition, with 42 members (excluding ships' crews), about 100 dogs, a Ford snow-tractor, wireless equipment, geological equipment, and three airplanes, departed New York Harbor on August 25, 1928.<sup>8</sup> The Miskatonic Expedition leaves Boston Harbor almost exactly two years later, on September 2, 1930, bringing with it a land expedition of 20 men, 55 dogs, wireless and geological research equipment, and five airplanes (MM 6f.). Both expeditions travel in two ships (Byrd's in the *City of New York* and the *Eleanor Bolling*; Lovecraft's in the brig *Arkham* and the barque *Miskatonic*) and both pass westward through the Panama Canal. Byrd stopped at Dunedin, New Zealand, for supplies; while the two Miskatonic ships dock at Hobart, Tasmania, for final supplies. After the ice-pack forced one of Byrd's ships to turn back, the other finally reached the Bay of Whales on December 28, 1928; and it was here that was erected their famous base, "Little America". Across the great Ross Ice Shelf at Ross Island, Lovecraft's protagonists land at the foot of Mt. Erebus on November 9, 1930, and unload their "drilling apparatus, dogs, sledges, tents, provisions, gasoline tanks, experimental ice-melting outfit, cameras both ordinary and aerial, aeroplane parts, and other accessories" (MM 8). Both parties lift their aircraft from the ships directly onto the ice-barrier for assembly; but unlike Byrd, Lovecraft preferred to keep his main base of operations aboard his ships. (Byrd sent his ships north on February 21, 1929, to keep them from becoming locked in the ice. Lovecraft's expedition didn't stay into the Antarctic winter, so this wasn't a problem for them.)

A word here about the Antarctic cold. Along about this point, Lovecraft's narrator says that "our experience with New England winters" (MM 9) had prepared them for the  $0^{\circ}$ - $+25^{\circ}$  temperatures they encounter on the ice.

5. Richard E. Byrd, Jr., *Little America* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1930), copyright page.

6. Kenneth W. Faig, Jr., *H. P. Lovecraft: His Life, His Work* (West Warwick, RI: Necronomicon Press, 1979), p. 35.

7. "Lost Arctic and Antarctic civilisations form a fascinating idea to me—I used it once in 'Polaris' and expect to use it again . . ." (SL III.38).

8. Edwin P. Hoyt, *The Lost Explorer: The Adventures of Admiral Byrd* (New York: John Day Co., 1968), pp. 165-250. All subsequent Byrd Expedition information is from this source.

This echoes the fact that several of Byrd's men trained in Labrador and New Hampshire preparatory to the South Polar trip. This also points up Lovecraft's idea of really cold temperatures, temperatures which would be considered balmy at the South Pole.

At this point in both expeditions, the aircraft come into play. Byrd made a flight on January 26, 1929, heading eastward into Edward VII Land and discovering the Rockefeller Mountains. Lovecraft's narrator Dyer and his companions fly almost due south on November 21, 1930, cross Beardmore Glacier and establish a second base at Latitude  $86^{\circ}7'$ , East Longitude  $174^{\circ}23'$ . (This is one part of the narrative, airplanes aside, that owes more to the journeys of Scott and Shackleton than to that of Byrd. Both Scott and Shackleton journeyed south toward the Pole over Beardmore Glacier from bases on Ross Island. Lovecraft's characters also recreate Shackleton's ascent of Mt. Erebus in 1908.<sup>9</sup>)

The Miskatonic's southern base is reminiscent of the string of supply bases set up by Byrd in October 1929, after the long inaction of the Antarctic winter. Such bases were essential because of the restricted range of aircraft at that time. From this southern base Lovecraft sends a party of three to scale Mt. Fritjof Nansen on December 13-15, and a flight of two of the Dornier airplanes over the South Pole on January 6, 1931. Rear Admiral Byrd and three others became the first to fly over the South Pole on November 28-29, 1929, using the big Ford Tri-motor airplane the "Floyd Bennett". We must backtrack a little here to take note of an interesting coincidence. On Byrd's flight southward, the plane was required to cross a high pass between two mountains, one of which was Mt. Nansen. There were 15,000 pounds of fuel, provisions, and equipment aboard the "Floyd Bennett", including several hundred pounds of photographic equipment, and it was only by dumping out 250 pounds of food (considered, incredibly, the least important) that they were able to clear the ice and bleak rocks of the pass. This is very reminiscent of Dyer and Danforth's flight over the pass in the Mountains of Madness, in a "lightened plane with aerial camera and geologist's outfit" (MM 40).

The Miskatonic's biologist Lake made a preliminary sledging and boring journey on January 11-18, 1931; and on the 22nd, with eleven men, 36 dogs, and all four Dornier aircraft, he flew over 700 miles northwestward. At Latitude  $76^{\circ}15'$ , Longitude  $113^{\circ}10' E.$ , Lake radios that they have spotted an enormous mountain chain.<sup>10</sup> After some observation flights over the foothills, and the exhumation of the Old Ones, Lake's group prepares to weather a storm that rushes upon them from the heights. (Interestingly, the area in Wilkes Land where Lovecraft places the end of his mountains is close to

9. Kearns and Britton, p. 228.

10. These coordinates should be taken as the airplane's location and not that of the mountains; using the description of the mountain range on page 70 of the Arkham House edition, these coordinates would still put Lake 100 miles away from it. This is possible, given the immensity of the chain and the altitude of the aircraft, and probable too, since they fly for another half hour (75 miles, at their rate of speed) before being forced down in the foothills. See map on back cover for reference.

the windiest place on earth. Winds of 200 miles an hour have been reported there.<sup>11</sup>) Here again we must look back at a remarkable similarity between Lovecraft's and Byrd's expeditions. On March 7, 1929, three members of Byrd's party flew to the base of the newly discovered Rockefeller Mountains for geological research. They were forced to remain there by the onset of a storm, and attempted to secure their plane to keep the wind from damaging it. They tied it to stakes in the ground and built a small snow-block wall around it; but the gale's end found the plane torn apart by the wind's fury. They were rescued two weeks later by Byrd himself. Similarly, when Dyer arrives with a rescue party on January 25, they find Lake's camp in the following condition:

It is a fact that the wind wrought dreadful havoc. . . . One aeroplane shelter—all, it seems, had been left in a far too flimsy and inadequate state—was nearly pulverized; and the derrick at the distant boring was entirely shaken to pieces. The exposed metal of the grounded planes and drilling machinery was bruised to a high polish, and two of the tents were flattened despite their snow banking. (MM 31-32)

Dyer and Danforth cross the great mountain chain on January 26, explore the city beyond, and return the same day. The rescue expedition, in three of the planes, returns to the southern base on the 27th, and back to Ross Island on the 28th. The ships *Arkham* and *Miskatonic*, with all aboard, pull away from the ice shelf on February 2, 1931. Byrd's expedition, after another exploratory flight over the Ross Ice Shelf, quit the Antarctic on February 18, 1930.

Thus we have the two expeditions, fact and fiction. It is clear that Lovecraft, though not intending to "cash in" on the popularity of Byrd's exploits, certainly admired the man enough to use his travels as a basis for his own flights of fancy. As for differences between the two, one of the major ones is the direction of exploration (Byrd to the east, Lovecraft to the northwest). But even here Lovecraft explains that his group originally intended to head "500 miles to the eastward" (MM 11) from the southern camp. That he sent them the other way is due to the far more unknown aspect of the northwest. Another difference is in time spent—Byrd was there fifteen months to Lovecraft's three. This discrepancy is due to two factors. One is the disaster at Lake's camp; they might have stayed another year, but for the horrific circumstances. Two is extremely good luck. Even the narrator of Lovecraft's tale says, "Our good luck and efficiency were almost uncanny" (MM 11). Compare, for example, the Miskatonic expedition to Byrd's second expedition (1933-35), during which the camp doctor became seriously ill, four of their five snow-tractors either broke down or burned, and Byrd himself almost suffocated while alone and far from help.<sup>12</sup> Notwithstanding the horrors in the Old Ones' city, the Miskatonic crew was lucky indeed.

Given the state of exploration, then, it's easy to see why the air-

11. James M. Darley, National Geographic Society Map of Antarctica, February 1963.

12. Hoyt, pp. 280-333.

planes appear in the story. But why Dornier airplanes? To answer this, we must look to the adventures of that other great polar hero, Roald Amundsen. In 1924 Amundsen and American adventurer Lincoln Ellsworth prepared to fly over the North Pole. The airplane upon which they finally decided for the flight was the Dornier Do-J "Wal", a two-engine, single-wing flying boat used primarily for passenger service. In his book *Beyond Horizons* Ellsworth explains the pilot's choice:

In the first place, he sought a ship with a duralumin hull. Wooden hulls he deemed unsuitable for landing on rough ice or in water filled with broken ice, because of the danger of stripping the bottom. Duralumin, even lighter than steel, will bend or dent under ordinary collisions but will not break much more readily than wood.

Several types of duralumin flying boats were then made in Europe. What determined the choice of the Dornier-Wal was the design of the hull itself. The lines of other hulls were such that in snow they would push the snow aside, in the manner of a plow. The Dornier-Wal had a lift forward that would enable it to climb over snow, like a toboggan, and was the only hull of that design in Europe.<sup>13</sup>

On the Antarctic continent, concern for drift ice would be unfounded; but the duralumin would still be protection against sastrugi, the odd ice-ripples found there. The handling in snow is more apt, since most of the Antarctic is snow.

Ellsworth goes on to explain the advantages of the two Rolls-Royce engines, one of which could keep the plane in the air and both of which could lift the plane plus its own weight in cargo (about 8,000 lbs.). These engines also contained heaters to keep oil and water from freezing, and 4% glycerine was added to the water to keep it liquid at -17° Celsius.<sup>14</sup>

These were modifications peculiar to the two Dorniers that Amundsen used. Of the 300 or so of the planes built, there were more than twenty versions and many individual modifications.<sup>15</sup> This fits in well with Lovecraft's narrator's statement about their "huge planes built to our especial orders for heavy machinery transportation" (MM 27), planes "designed especially for the tremendous altitude flying necessary on the antarctic plateau and with added fuel-warming and quick starting devices" (MM 4). With a 73-foot wingspan,<sup>16</sup> the Wal would certainly qualify for the narrator's description of "huge".

As for the range of flight, the farthest the planes in the story are required to fly in one jump is 700 miles (from the southern camp to Lake's camp), and the Dornier-Wal was capable of nearly twice that (1,367 miles).<sup>17</sup> Of course, they planned to get back, too; but that could have been accomplished by ferrying fuel in one of the planes, just as they did from Ross Island to the southern base (MM 12).

13. Lincoln Ellsworth, Beyond Horizons (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, Doran, 1938), pp. 145-46.

14. Hjalmar Riiser-Larsen, et al., Our Polar Flight: The Amundsen-Ellsworth Polar Flight (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1925), p. 153.

15. John Stroud, European Transport Aircraft since 1910 (Fallbrook, CA: Aero Publishers, 1966), p. 239.

16. Stroud, p. 242.

17. Ibid.

Another important factor in this plane's success would be its weight capacity. This is especially relevant when dealing with food, for an expedition's provisions must all be brought along—Antarctica is a sterile land. Using calculations worked up by Rear Admiral Byrd in Little America,<sup>18</sup> and specifications for the Dornier-Wal, the following possible checklist has been made for Lake's sub-expedition, for a sixty-day excursion:

ITEM(S)	WEIGHT
12 men	2,400 lbs.
36 dogs (80 lbs. each)	2,880
human food	2,160
dog food	3,888
3 sledges (long Norwegian freight sledges)	153
dog gear	36
navigation, surveying, and meteorological equipment	91
radio gear	300
safety devices	40
tools	20
personal equipment	700
gasoline	<u>9,000</u>
TOTAL	21,688

Considering that the Dornier-Wal was capable of carrying 7,000 pounds of cargo, it's plain that Lake's four Dorniers could handle what this trip required of it, plus room for extra gasoline and Peabodie's drilling and melting apparatus (about which we can only guess the weight).

There are a couple of differences between the Wal and the planes mentioned in *At the Mountains of Madness*. One is the "landing skis" mentioned on MM 49, and another is the narrator's telling about getting "the engine started" (MM 104), intimating one as opposed to the Wal's two. As for the skis, it's been shown that the Wals wouldn't need them; but on the other hand, they couldn't hurt. Most planes attempting the Antarctic, even today, sport skis. As for the engines, the Wal's two engines were housed in one nacelle, which could easily have been mistaken by Lovecraft for one engine. The main problem with the Dornier-Wal is its ceiling, or maximum altitude. Lovecraft has his plane clearing a pass of 24,000 feet, more than twice the ceiling of the Wal. However, we must take Lovecraft's word that his planes were suitably equipped for this rare height, and allow him some artistic license.

Finally, a note on the mountains themselves. There are, unfortunately (or fortunately), no such mountains in that part of Antarctica; but happily, this was never disproved during Lovecraft's lifetime. "I have to

18. Byrd, pp. 257, 261, 277.

stop dreaming about an unknown realm (such as Antarctica or Arabia Deserta) as soon as the explorers enter it" (SL III.140). So wrote Lovecraft in 1930, and we are all very fortunate that the explorers stayed away long enough for him to complete his story. The real "Mountains of Madness" (the highest in Antarctica, anyway) were discovered in 1935 by Lincoln Ellsworth on the first trans-Antarctic flight. He and his pilot passed far to the west of them and christened them the Sentinel Mountains; but, like the characters in *At the Mountains of Madness*, a haze hid the highest peaks from them. Ellsworth and his pilot considered them a minor range, unaware that the 14,000-foot peak of Vinson Massif lay just beyond their sight. Earlier on the flight, the fliers had found and named the Eternity Range, for reasons that sound remarkably like something Lovecraft might have said:

We were indeed the first intruding mortals in this age-old region, and looking down on the mighty peaks I thought of eternity and man's insignificance.<sup>19</sup>

At the *Mountains of Madness* thus stands as a monument to Lovecraft's imagination, his ability to capture the real and to make us believe the unreal.

19. Ellsworth, p. 320.

#### BRIEFLY NOTED

We all know what Lovecraft thought of Lord Dunsany; in "Lord Dunsany and His Work" he wrote a florid paean to the Irish fantaisiste, and in "Supernatural Horror in Literature" he speaks of him in scarcely less adulatory a fashion. But what did Dunsany think of Lovecraft? Thanks to David E. Schultz, we now have an answer to that question. Schultz has unearthed the following letter written by the aged Dunsany to August Derleth, and it speaks for itself:

Dunstall Priory  
Shoreham N<sup>E</sup> Sevenoaks  
March 28, 1952

Dear Mr. Derleth

I have been told of an article which I never saw in print, written about my work by the late H. P. Lovecraft, in a book published by you called *Marginalia*. It would be very kind of you if you would give me a copy of this book because I cannot get one here, & have an odd interest in Lovecraft's work because in the few tales of his I have read I found that he was writing in my style, entirely originally & without in any way borrowing from me, & yet with my style & largely my material. It would much interest me to see the book if you would be so kind as to send me a copy.

Yours sincerely,  
Dunsany

# Reviews

H. P. LOVECRAFT. *Dagon and Other Macabre Tales*. Selected by August Derleth, With Texts Edited by S. T. Joshi and an Introduction by T. E. D. Klein. Sauk City, WI: Arkham House, 1986. lii, 448 pp. \$18.95 hc.  
Reviewed by Steven J. Mariconda.

Very little need be said in defence of *Dagon and Other Macabre Tales*—the new edition from Arkham House makes a fitting capstone to the new textually corrected trilogy of Lovecraft's fiction. This volume differs even more radically from the previous edition than either of its two companion volumes, for aside from the attractive production and accurate texts it features a few surprises.

One immediately notices, for example, that the first story in the volume is no longer the title story, but "The Tomb"! This is because the contents—save the early tales (including the not-so-early "Transition of Juan Romero"), the fragments, and "Supernatural Horror in Literature"—are now presented in chronological order. This is a great boon, if one keeps in mind the items that were placed in the other two volumes. These items (beginning with 1919's "Statement of Randolph Carter") were excluded because August Derleth grouped the tales by quality and not chronology; they remain in this grouping because of the copyright problems that would result for Arkham House from a more extensive rearrangement.

But it is easy for us to track the order in which the stories were written, thanks to the inclusion of textual editor S. T. Joshi's comprehensive chronology of Lovecraft's fiction, handsomely set in small caps, at the back of the volume. This replaces Derleth's spurious chronology in the previous edition. He simply arranged in alphabetical order the titles for each year, not even making note of this approach—a perfect example of the lazy scholarship that also contributed to the corruption of the texts. Joshi's chronology (first printed in his *H. P. Lovecraft: Four Decades of Criticism* [1980] in a more cluttered format) covers everything from "The Noble Eavesdropper" (1897?; non-extant) to "The Night Ocean" (with R. H. Barlow; Autumn? 1936). It includes all Lovecraft's fiction and revisions, even such obscure items as "Old Bugs" and "Sweet Ermengarde".

But the main attraction, as usual, are the texts themselves. Joshi has added a more detailed textual introduction to this volume than he did to the others, listing the manuscript sources for each item. As exhaustive as the list is, it only hints at the amount of work that went into the project, for Joshi does not detail the difficult choices and painstaking word-for-word collation of all other manuscripts and relevant publications that had to be accomplished for each work. One wishes for a full textual apparatus here, so that we could see how Lovecraft revised his texts and

what decisions Joshi made in arriving at his definitive versions. The editor covered some of this in his "Textual Problems in Lovecraft: A Preliminary Survey" (*Lovecraft Studies* #6, Spring 1982), and perhaps we can hope for a similar article from him on this topic in the future.

Some of the textual changes here are striking. "Facts concerning the Late Arthur Jermyn and His Family", "Under the Pyramids", and "Celephais" (with diaeresis; note similarly the restoration of diacritical marks on words such as "Argimènès" and "Meroë") have finally been graced with their proper titles, and "The Tomb", "Beyond the Wall of Sleep", and "The Tree" again have epigraphs. A more amusing restoration is the footnote to "Juan Romero": "AUTHOR'S NOTE: Here is a lesson in scientific accuracy for fiction writers. I have just looked up the moon's phases for October, 1894, to find when a gibbous moon was visible at 2 a.m., and have changed the dates to fit!" (As hilarious as this is, it does reflect Lovecraft's lifelong concern with accuracy in his fiction; his letters to Derleth, for example, are full of long notations of geographical and other errors in the latter's tales.)

Another thing that jumps out at the reader is the typographic devices Lovecraft used for emphasis in certain tales, especially in the last line of "The Alchemist" (which, in addition to the four exclamation points dispersed throughout, goes into italics and then into all caps) and "The Beast in the Cave" (where the last word and its accompanying three exclamation points are now in bold). Lovecraft never quite lost his juvenile fondness for such things, but, happily, became slightly more subtle as he progressed. In "The Temple", the dramatic dialogue of the mad Klenze is one step more emphatic, with the addition of underlining—"He is calling! He is calling! I hear him! We must go!"; likewise for "The Other Gods", where Atal now cries in horror of "the other gods! the other gods!"

Because most of the stories here were first printed in pulp magazines, many had been reparagraphed for "easier" reading until this edition. A notable example is "The Hound", where the many divided paragraphs and two sensational one-sentence paragraphs ("Then terror came" and "Then he collapsed, an inert mass of mangled flesh"—as if this story needed any more floridity!) have now been put right. *Weird Tales*, perhaps because of Lovecraft's early injunction that they print his stories only on the condition that they follow his texts, actually treated the stories better than did some others. "The Doom That Came to Sarnath", which appeared in *Marvel Tales*, was almost as horribly butchered as the men in that story are. Notice things like the last sentence; before:

But half buried in the rushes was spied a curious green idol; an exceedingly ancient idol chisled in the likeness of Bokrug, the great water-lizard.

and after:

But half buried in the rushes was spied a curious green idol of stone; an exceedingly ancient idol coated in seaweed and chiseled in the likeness of Bokrug, the great water-lizard.

Only six words omitted from the sentence in the previous edition—but unfortunately this amounts to one-fifth of the sentence! (The rest of the story was equally corrupt, prompting Joshi to call it "a textual nightmare".)

A very special part of this volume is "Supernatural Horror in Literature". We can for the first time read Lovecraft's great essay (generally accepted as the finest critical survey of weird fiction ever written) as he intended us to. Joshi notes in his introduction that this piece presented particular textual problems of its own; indeed, the preparation of the text was originally as a project in itself, a critical edition that never saw print. Joshi used the text from *The Recluse*, *The Fantasy Fan*, and *The Outsider and Others* to compile his version, and presents the most complete and definitive version yet printed. He has even gone back to the original sources (like Samuel Loveman's introduction to *Twenty-one Letters of Ambrose Bierce*) from which Lovecraft cited, and cleaned up transcription errors in the passages Lovecraft quoted. The essay is made even more useful by the index (yes, an index in an Arkham House book!) that is supplied.

The book is topped off by a 40-page introduction by leading weird fictionist T. E. D. Klein. Klein reviews Lovecraft's literary and personal fondness for Lord Dunsany, his New York "exile", and his literary techniques and themes. The latter discussion is quite comprehensive, if somewhat discursive, and touches on many important facets of Lovecraft's work—things like the use of the dream-city, and the themes of degeneration, fear of the impermanent, and adventurous expectancy. Among Klein's many insights is that Lovecraft's early stories are often "miniatures" of his later, greater works. This is strikingly evident on rereading the stories in this volume. In varying degrees, "The Moon-Bog" has much in common with "The Rats in the Walls", "The Nameless City" with *At the Mountains of Madness*, "The Tomb" and "The Alchemist" with *The Case of Charles Dexter Ward*, and "Facts concerning the Late Arthur Jermyn and His Family" with "The Shadow over Innsmouth". In all, the introduction contains a tremendous amount of information, and will be an especial help to the new reader of Lovecraft. Klein (who has a compulsive fondness for Lovecraft's letters) uses copious quotations to let the Providence dreamer do as much of the talking as possible, and this gives the reader a good sense of Lovecraft's personality.

Since this is the last volume of the definitive fiction, it is appropriate to congratulate once more S. T. Joshi on his rediscovery of the "real" Lovecraft. His achievement will stand as a lasting monument to his many contributions to Lovecraft studies. James Turner of Arkham House, who saw Joshi's work to print, should also be singled out. On reflection, it is a sad and astonishing realization that it took fully forty years after Lovecraft's death for the event to come to pass. There are more intangible benefits, also. These volumes will do much to speed the continuing progress of Lovecraft from pulp hack to American artist. Anyone who approaches them will not encounter the garish, shabby, and none-too-coherent editions which have previously been the rule. Instead they will see the scholarly care, effort, and editorial interest befitting an author of literary merit and philosophical depth.

HENRY L. P. BECKWITH, JR. *Lovecraft's Providence and Adjacent Parts.* West Kingston, RI: Donald M. Grant, 1986. 95 pp. \$15.00 hc. Reviewed by Will Murray.

First published in 1979, this handly little guide to the Rhode Island haunts of H. P. Lovecraft has been reprinted. An outgrowth of a tour the noted researcher conducted during the First World Fantasy Convention in 1975, *Lovecraft's Providence and Adjacent Parts* describes four separate tours of the Providence area, and the important sites mentioned in Lovecraft's stories and letters. As someone who has frequently guided non-New Englanders through the byzantine byways of Lovecraft's beloved natal city, I've found it very useful, although the margin references designed to link specific sites to textual sources are rendered useless because Beckwith refers the reader to the hopelessly out-of-print Arkham editions of *The Outsider* and *Beyond the Wall of Sleep*—neither of which one is likely to tote on a tour, assuming one owned them. Despite that puzzling fault, this is a wonderful tool with which to discover the sites of "The Call of Cthulhu"'s Fleur-de-Lys Building and the imposing "Shunned House".

While the body of the text is virtually identical to the earlier edition, there are attempts to update old information. The blank pages headed "Tour Notes" have been replaced with additional notes and updates of site changes. Beckwith notes the demise of the Met Cafe—a mere pit stop not having anything to do with Lovecraft—and one of the four tour maps reflects its loss, but the addition of the new Hot Club, while keyed to that selfsame map, is curiously not to be found. Another error is the failure to amend the dedication to Beckwith's now-former wife—something the author could be heard grumbling about at the recent World Fantasy Convention.

More useful changes include a new version of the photograph of Old Narragansett Church in Wickford, a new back cover by David Ireland (who also supplied the maps), and sharper reproduction of Ireland's near-perfect front cover, depicting a Lovecraftian entity hovering over one of Lovecraft's favorite Providence buildings, the First Baptist Church. The inclusion of the Lovecraft family coat of arms, with its revelation that the three canine heads—thought by Lovecraft to be foxes—are in fact wolves, is a perfect close to this valuable book. Those who already own the first edition may not need the second, but that's not likely to inhibit the true Lovecraft collector. For those who don't own it, it's a must. And with this edition limited to but 500 copies, it will not be long in print.

PETER CANNON. *The Chronology out of Time: Dates in the Fiction of H. P. Lovecraft.* West Warwick, RI: Necronomicon Press, 1986. 33 pp. \$3.95. Reviewed by S. T. Joshi.

This is a book I would very much like to have written. Even the most casual reader of Lovecraft must have sensed the unprecedented precision of

Lovecraft's work—a precision not only of diction, construction, and philosophical orientation, but a precision of setting. Aside from the Dunsanian fantasies and the earlier Poe-esque tales (where such precision would in fact be detrimental), Lovecraft's fiction is unquestionably rooted in a very real time (the period of Lovecraft's own life) and place (the New England he knew so well). There are not many authors in all literature—Dickens, Hardy, and Faulkner are the ones that immediately come to mind—for whom Peter Cannon could have done what he has done here: to make a chronology of events in Lovecraft's stories from the early middle ages to 1935. It is amazing how much there is to list: from the Renaissance to the twentieth century things happen in Lovecraft, whether it be the various translations of the *Necronomicon* or the destruction of Dunwich. In horror fiction only M. R. James can even approach the fanatical precision with which Lovecraft established this mythical chronology, this bold rewriting of history.

The parameters of Cannon's chronology might initially seem arbitrary, but they ultimately justify themselves. Why limit the chronology to no earlier than 700 (the floruit of Abdul Alhazred) and no later than 1935 (the death of Robert Blake)? It is because the events before and after these dates—as far back as the heyday of the Great Race 150,000,000 years ago and as far forward as the death of the sun—can all be found in *At the Mountains of Madness* and "The Shadow out of Time", and then only on the assumption (now questioned by Robert M. Price) that the profound inconsistencies between the two stories can be harmonised. Why include dates only from the two revisions "The Mound" and "Out of the Eons"? Well, the other revisions don't actually offer much in terms of dating anyhow.

We can learn much from this listing. One wonders, for example, why Lovecraft set "The Picture in the House" in 1896, when he wrote the story in 1920. The plot does not depend on this date, for the supernatural premise of the story—that the old man has outlived his normal span through cannibalism—could certainly have allowed the cheerful carnivore to live a few more decades, closer to the time of the story's composition. This story—as well, perhaps, as "Beyond the Wall of Sleep", set in 1901 but written in 1919—may represent a transition from the never-never-land of "The Tomb" to the contemporaneity of "The Rats in the Walls".

Again, Cannon remarks that the sparseness of events in the nineteenth century—indeed, if we remove the events uncovered by the newspaper reporter in "The Haunter of the Dark", almost nothing remains between the death of Joseph Curwen in 1771 and the fall of the meteorite in 1882, aside from the endless cycle of births and deaths in "The Shunned House"—is a result of Lovecraft's "antipathy to the Victorian age". There may be more to it than that. Certainly Lovecraft had no fondness for the hypocrisy and shallowness of Victorian society, but more than that the whole nineteenth century represented a sort of limbo—separate alike from the hallowed eighteenth century and the grinding reality of the twentieth. It had for Lovecraft not yet become history—and therefore he could not write about it as he did the eighteenth century in *The Case of Charles Dexter Ward*—and it did not have the immediacy of his own day.

All this makes me wonder why Lovecraft went to such trouble to refashion

history in this way. To be more precise, it was not that he was rewriting history; rather, he was simply filling in the gaps. Just as his whole aesthetic of weird fiction required that he create "supplements rather than contradictions" of the "real" universe, so Lovecraft felt compelled to insert nameless events into the underside of history. The past is not as bland and straightforward as the history books tell us; other things have happened that make our existence on this earth infinitely more precarious. This is the secret of Lovecraft's horrific effectiveness: it is not merely that we must be on guard for things that will occur; it is that we are rendered totally helpless because certain things have already occurred. R'lyeh will rise again because it rose before; the Old Ones will take over because they once ruled. It is this historical determinism that makes Lovecraft's world so profoundly dispiriting.

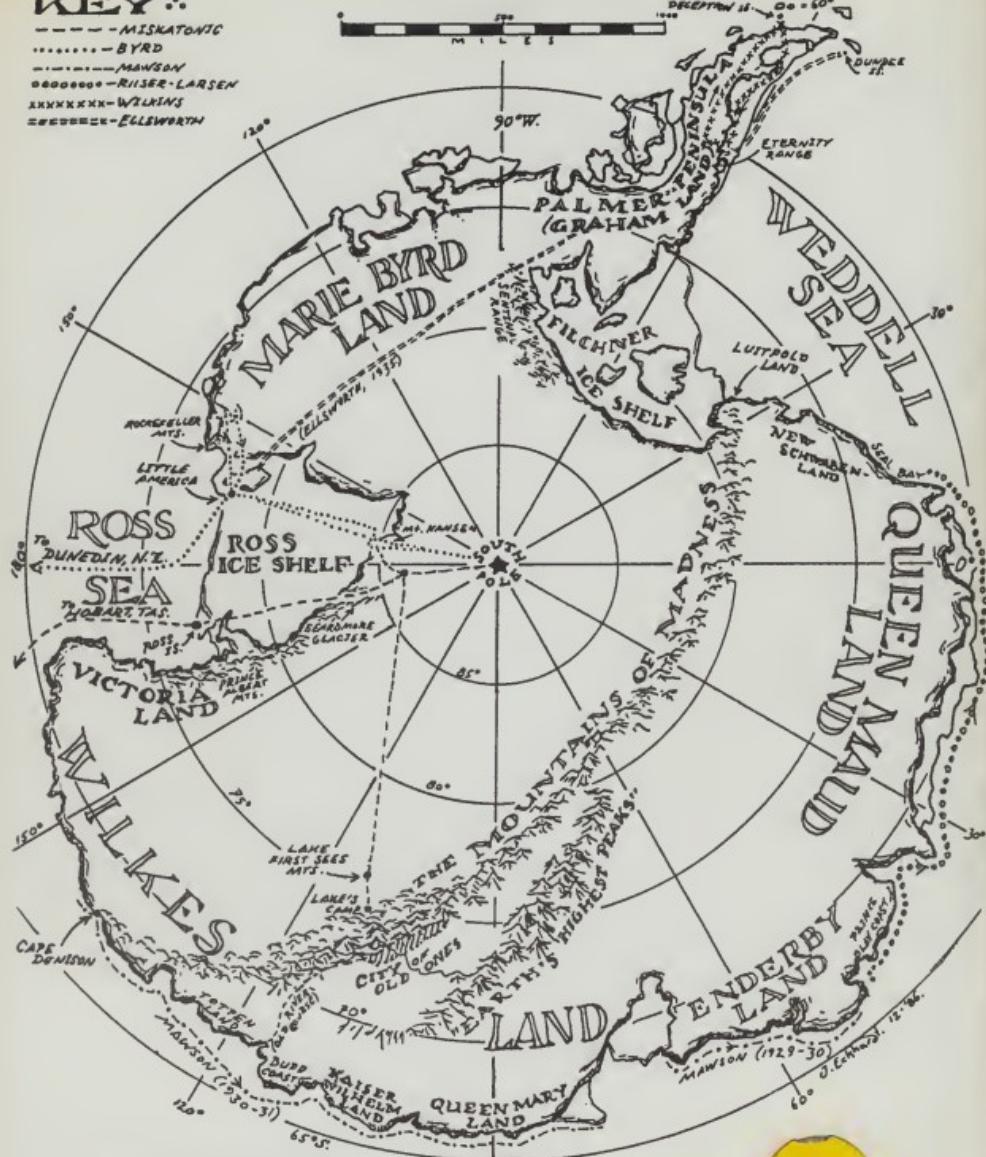
#### BRIEFLY NOTED

A token of Lovecraft's ascending recognition in the academic world is the emergence of two anthologies of Lovecraft criticism included in recent library reference works. *Twentieth-Century American Literature, Volume 4* (1986), part of the Chelsea House Library of Literary Criticism, contains a 21-page selection of excerpts of Lovecraft criticism made by S. T. Joshi, managing editor of the Chelsea House series. In *Topics in Contemporary Literary Criticism, Volume 22* (1986), published by the Gale Research Co., Thomas Ligotti has made a 40-page selection of similar material. It is surprising how little overlap there is between the two. Joshi has included such things as Clark Ashton Smith's exquisite "To Howard Phillips Lovecraft", excerpts from W. Paul Cook's and Sonia H. Davis's memoirs, a large chunk of Peter Penzoldt's discussion from *The Supernatural in Fiction* (1952), and such lengthy essays as Paul Buhle's "Dystopia as Utopia", Donald R. Burleson's "The Mythic Hero Archetype in 'The Dunwich Horror'", and Joshi's own "Topical References in Lovecraft". Ligotti has included some rather odd items—Ursula K. Le Guin's and Larry McMurtry's highly uninformed reviews of the de Camp biography, Anton LaVey's peculiar "Metaphysics of Lovecraft"—plus lengthy excerpts from Barton L. St Armand's two books, Burleson's Greenwood Press study, and Joshi's Starmont Reader's Guide. Joshi regrets not being able to include anything by Robert M. Price, but declares that he would have liked to use Price's landmark "Demythologizing Cthulhu", included in Ligotti's selection. Peter Cannon (whose forthcoming book on Lovecraft for Twayne's United States Authors Series ought to be a revelation) was not included in either selection, but Steven J. Mariconda was represented in Joshi with his article on prose realism and in Ligotti with his article on background in Lovecraft.

**KEY**

- - - MISKATONIC  
- - - BYRD  
- - - MAWSON  
0 0 0 0 0 0 0 - RIISE-LARSEN  
XXXXXX-XX-WILKINS  
ZZZZZZ-ZZ-ELLESWORTH

DECEPTION IS.  
0° - 60° S.  
1000 MILES



Necronomicon Press

S.

4.50

# AMAZING STORIES

APRIL  
25 Cents



A  
**COSMIC  
JUKEBOX  
SCAN**